

Foreword

by

Bill Readings

*Jean-François
Lyotard*

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Translated by Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman

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Political Writings

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Jean-François Lyotard

Translated by Bill Readings with Kevin Paul Geiman

Foreword and Notes by Bill Readings



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Abbreviations

ALN Armée de libération nationale (Algerian National Liberation Army)

The military arm of the FLN from 1954 to 1962, the National Liberation Army was in the forefront of the struggle for Algerian independence. Many political leaders, such as Boumedienne, rose to prominence through the army.

ANP Armée nationale populaire (Algerian People's Army)

This organization replaced the ALN as the official Algerian military establishment in 1962. It was known as the Guardian of the Revolution, and it remained loyal to Ben Bella during the postindependence divisions of 1965.

CCE Comité de coordination et d'exécution (Executive Coordinating Committee)

In August 1956 the internal leadership of the FLN established a formal policy-making body to synchronize the movement's political and military activities. The five-member CCE was the executive of the CNRA, which had 34 members.

CGT Confédération générale du travail

The French Communist Trade Union Confederation, a group of unions controlled by the French Communist party. In 1956 the FLN ordered all Algerians to leave the French trade unions and formed the UGTA. The leader of the CGT in 1968 was Georges Séguay.

CNRA Conseil national de la révolution algérienne (National Council of the Algerian Revolution)

Thirty-four member policy-making body founded by the FLN in August 1956. In 1962 the CNRA adopted a series of policies for an independent Algeria known as the Tripoli program. This program called for agrarian reform and nationalizations. It was opposed by Ben Khedda of the GPRA.

CRUA Comité révolutionnaire d'unité et d'action

The prototype of the CNRA, the CRUA came into being in 1954 as a grouping of Algerian revolutionaries committed to the armed struggle. Largely drawn from the revolutionary “committee of 22,” its membership included Ben Bella.

CSP Comité de salut public (Committee of Public Safety)

The name adopted by a group of right-wing French colonists, led by Generals Massu and Salan, who opposed Algerian independence.

FLN Front de libération nationale (Algerian National Liberation Front)

Algerian independence movement formed in 1954, which came to power under Ben Bella's leadership in the one-party postindependence state of Algeria in 1962. The war of independence was launched by Frontist guerrillas on November 1, 1954, and the Front remained the independence group most directly identified with the war.

GG Gouvernement général

The official title of the French command in Algiers.

GPRA Gouvernement provisoire de la république algérienne

The provisional government of the Algerian republic was set up by the FLN during the war of independence and negotiated the 1962 Evian agreements with France. Based in Tunis, this government-in-exile was headed by Abbas and included Ben Khedda.

JC Jeunesse communiste (Young Communists)
The communist youth movement in France.

MNA Mouvement national algérien (Algerian National Movement)
An independence movement opposed to the FLN, founded by Messali soon after the revolution began. The MNA had influence among Algerian workers in France.

MTLD Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques
The movement for the triumph of democratic liberties, also known as the centralists, was founded before the revolution and led by Messali. Committed to unequivocal independence, it opposed Abbas's integrationist program. Its newspaper was *El Maghrib el Arabi*.

MRP Mouvement républicain populaire (Popular Front)
The coalition of communists, socialists, and Christian democrats, led by Léon Blum, that ruled France from 1944 to 1947.

OAS Organisation armée secrète (Secret Army Organization)
A terrorist group of right-wing vigilantes opposed to Algerian independence. Founded by Pierre Sergent, it came to light in the putsch of 1961.

OS Organisation spéciale (Special Organization)
The clandestine organization for armed resistance to French occupation in Algeria, formed in 1947 by Aït Ahmed when the authorities suppressed political protest. Later led by Ben Bella, it developed into the ALN.

PCA Parti communiste algérien (Algerian Communist party)
Led by Messali, the PCA never belonged to the FLN coalition.

PCF Parti communiste français (French Communist party)
Led by Secretary General Thorez during the Algerian war. Valdeck Rochet took over upon the death of Thorez in 1964.

PDI Parti démocratique de l'indépendance (Istiqlal)

The Moroccan Democratic Independence party was formed in 1944 and won independence in 1955. Its newspaper was called *Al-Istiqlal*.

PPA Parti du peuple algérien (Algerian People's Party)

The prewar party led by Messali that became the MTLD around 1946.

PRS Parti de la révolution socialiste (Algerian Party of the Socialist Revolution)

Founded by Mohamed Boudiaf immediately after independence in 1962 and based in Morocco, the PRS was opposed to the GPRA government.

PS Parti socialiste (French Socialist party)

PSA Parti socialiste autonome]

In 1958 a group of socialists split off from the SFIO, in opposition to SFIO leader Guy Mollet, who was supporting de Gaulle's return to power. In 1959 Mendès-France joined the PSA, which later merged with other groups to form the Unified Socialist party.

RPF Rassemblement du peuple français

Gaullist group from 1947 to 1952.

SAU Sections administratives urbaines

French colonial administrative classifications for Algerian towns and cities.

SAS Sections administratives spéciales

French colonial administrative classification for areas of political turbulence.

SFIO Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière

The French section of the workers' International became the present Socialist party in 1969. SFIO leader Guy Mollet became French premier in 1956.

SNE Sup Syndicat national de l'enseignement supérieur

The French university teachers' union, led in 1968 by Alain Geismar.

UDMA Union démocratique du Manifeste algérien (Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto)

Founded by Abbas in 1948, the UDMA maintained "friendly neutrality" during the first year of the war of independence, afterwards supporting the FLN. A liberal bourgeois party, the UDMA formally joined the FLN in 1956. Its newspaper was *Egalité: La République Algérienne*.

UEC Union d'étudiants communistes (French Communist Students' Union)

UGEMA Union générale des étudiants musulmans algériens (General Union of Algerian Muslim Students)

Formed by the FLN in 1955 as an autonomous student wing of the party, the group changed its name to Union nationale des étudiants algériens in 1963.

UGT Union générale des travailleurs (French General Workers' Union)
Noncommunist trade union in France.

UGTA Union générale des travailleurs algériens (Algerian General Union of Workers)

Formed in 1956, when the CGT was no longer politically viable, after the FLN broke with the PCF.

UGTT	Union générale des travailleurs tunisiens (Tunisian General Workers' Union)	Broke away from the CGT in 1946 under the leadership of Hached. The UGTT cooperated closely with the Néo-Destour party after Hached was murdered by colonist vigilantes in the early 1950s; Ben Salah took over the leadership.
UGS	Union de la gauche socialiste (Union of the Socialist Left)	
UNR	Union pour la nouvelle république	Gaullist party from 1958 to 1967, afterwards called the UDR (Union pour la défense de la république, and later Union des démocrates pour la république). Chaban-Delmers was president of the party in 1968–69.
USRAF	Union pour le salut et le renouveau de l'Algérie française	A precursor of the CSP, this organization was founded by General Massu after the riots of French settlers on May 13, 1958, in Algiers to represent the interests of the <i>pieds-noirs</i> .
USTA	Union des syndicats des travailleurs algériens	When the UGTA split off from the communist CGT in 1956, the CGT in Algeria reacted by forming itself into an autonomous group and changing its name to the USTA.
USTT	Union de syndicats de travailleurs tunisiens	When the UGTT split off from the communist CGT in 1945, the CGT in Tunisia reacted by becoming autonomous and changing its name to the USTT.
UTM	Union des travailleurs marocains (Moroccan Workers' Union)	Independent Moroccan workers' union, led by Mahjoub ben Seddik.

Foreword

The End of the Political

Bill Readings

Biography and Engagement

“...the impasse between militant delirium and skepticism”
“March 23”

Spanning more than thirty years of political activity, this collection of texts by a single individual might seem to call out for a biographical narrative to accompany it. For all its insistence on historical analysis, the political left has always relished hagiography, since the individual as moral exemplum performs the problematic theoretical reconciliation between historical or economic determinism and individual action, sketches a politics for the present conjuncture. Politics, for contemporary Marxism, thus names the presence of historical forces as a field of possibilities. Individuals, by their political actions, actualize history correctly or incorrectly. Despite our vaunted suspicion of the liberal humanist “subject,” we still want heroic narratives. “Men do not make history under circumstances chosen by themselves,” certainly, but they still make themselves as examples of the historical process.¹

The writings collected here certainly provide a useful empirical corrective to charges that poststructuralism is an evasion of politics, or that Lyotard’s account of the postmodern condition is the product of blissful ignorance of the postcolonial question. Yet any discussion of the formative influences of the Second World War, the complex fragmentations of the postwar French left, the challenge of the Algerian War to the social fabric of France, the role and treatment of intellectuals in the French media, the persistence of anti-Semitism in French society, or the political role of the university during and since the events of May 1968 would obscure far more than it would clarify. Such themes and events appear in these texts; indeed, their absence would be surprising. Algeria is not Lyotard’s Spanish Civil War, however, or even Sartre’s Algeria. That is to say, Algeria offers Lyotard no way to pretend that he can

occupy the position of the other and engage in heroic combat by proxy, as foot soldier, journalist, or strategist. His account of the anti-imperialist struggle is not that of an epistemological imperialist ready to speak in the name of others, eager to realize himself through the process of self-immolation or self-emasculation. Lyotard knows that engaged intellectuals do not “lose themselves” as common soldiers or simple reporters but rather find themselves thereby, as the selfless consciousness of history itself. Relinquishing this pretension, he writes not of “the Algerian War” but of “the Algerians’ war”—a war that is not his, cannot be his, but that nonetheless calls out to him, demands a testimony that can never be adequate, a response that can never redeem his debt or obligation.

Thus, Lyotard’s political writing can never add up, can never achieve the status of a settlement of accounts, a settled or established account, a biography. As Lyotard himself remarks, revolution is not a matter of bookkeeping: even if history will have proved him right in arguing against the common leftist assumption of the universal validity of Marxist analysis in anticolonial struggles,² the solace of hindsight can only betray what is most political, and most tenuous, in these writings. Their politics lies in a fragile and fugitive attention to events, to the unforeseeable solidarity of the oppressed and the unimaginable imagination of militants. No historical forces, not even an indomitable and ahistorical popular will, can account for inexplicable mass demonstrations in Algeria or civil disobediences without a political program in the Paris of 1968. Such events seem to occur in flagrant disregard of possible origins or likely outcomes, as eruptions of an affective enthusiasm that ignores cognitive explanation and classification, including appeals to “the human spirit.”³ We give these events names or dates that function as names. “1968” functions as a name in that it exceeds historical accounting; it is not a year that stands out in history so much as a name that marks the failure of historical consciousness to reduce temporality to a regulated succession or rhythm. The names of such events are rigid designators of their specificity, they mark the very fact that we cannot determine their historical or political significance: these names indicate referents whose meaning is yet to be determined, that evoke a work of political discussion in order to invent the criteria by which they may be judged.

Politics, in Lyotard’s writings, is a sense of astonishment that anything can happen at all, given the crushing weight of the capitalist economy and the institutions of the modern state on the one hand, and the party and union bureaucracies on the other. Any politics that seeks to predict and organize resistance and critique can only serve to strengthen the state, given that capitalism does not suffer from contradictions so much as profit from them. In an advanced capitalist democracy, the union organization, with its patrons

and bosses, does not simply repeatedly fail the workers, it turns their very resistance into a locus of alienation in that the worker has access to his or her strength only insofar as it is mediated by a representational system. The lineaments of this process become clear when the unions are directly integrated into the state, as in the old Soviet Union. Then bureaucracy rather than the cash nexus becomes the locus of expropriation: in each case the workers' strength is no longer their own; it is returned to them as illusory representation, whether as wages or as Red Square parades.

And yet, despite the capacity of systems of political representation to absorb and channel energies, things happen; unpredictable resistances occur. A political writing must preserve a sense of wonder at these happenings, if it is not to fall into either chiliastic militancy or disillusioned skepticism. Militant psychosis denies the world in favor of an interior certainty, and dooms itself to heroic failure—dooms itself in that each failure serves only to bolster that certainty. Each act of the Baader-Meinhof group provided the West German state with a pretext for reinforcing the police as the repressive apparatus of “liberal capitalist democracy,” and the group hailed each defeat as a victory, as a further revelation of the true nature of capitalism, a step on the road to terminal crisis—right up to the point at which one of the group managed the remarkable feat of shooting himself in the back of the head in a West German prison. The cynical skeptic is the obverse of this coin, the one who finds in each failure a confirmation of the utter loss of political hope, in each success an illusion and a betrayal. Despair masks itself as “realism.” Neither militant nor cynic has anything to learn; neither can listen. Lyotard’s political writing is a struggle to listen, to hear a politics that cannot speak the language of the political.

Herein lies another reason for the inappropriateness of biographical narrative for this least Hegelian of thinkers. Narratives of heroic struggle or growing disillusion can only replay the binary opposition between militant and skeptic that structures the postwar or cold war period, the very opposition against which all of Lyotard’s political writing struggles, to a greater or lesser degree.

The writings in this collection are not organized chronologically. In Lyotard’s case, to trace the shift from his membership in Socialism or Barbarism through his participation in the events of May 1968 and on to an analysis of what he has called “the postmodern condition” (whether the process is presented as a growing despair and loss of commitment or as a growing refinement of the terms of political analysis) would be to return these writings to the very order of political discourse against which they struggle, at which they scream and laugh. No balance sheet of positions taken can do justice to his politics of writing, since these texts are written in a revolutionary time: the noncumulative time of minoritarian struggles, which resist history, refuse

the dialectic of imperial time that seeks to transform them into oppositional forces, or to erase them altogether.

Finally, intellectual biography is disallowed by Lyotard's refusal to be an intellectual, to represent or incarnate an authority, any authority, which marks him as not merely a member of a minority but as a minoritarian thinker, carrying on a politics that is devoid of all totalitarian vocation. A politics, that is, that looks very unlike what we are used to, and a politics that will require more detailed introduction.

Debt Crisis and Modern Political Thought

The present volume groups essays and articles around topics that are not simply political "issues." Each marks a field in which the terms of political action and thought have come into crisis. The essays and interviews grouped under the title "Big Brothers," with its allusion to the Orwellian state portrayed in *1984*, focus on the problem of authority in political writing. As such, they generalize the question of the role and function of intellectuals raised in the section of that name. How is one to write, speak, or act politically without presuming an authority, implicitly practicing the kind of totalitarian injustice for which Lyotard and Deleuze criticize Lacan in "Concerning the Vincennes Psychoanalytic Department"? The notion of authority presumes the capacity to say what is right or good, to issue prescriptions as to the nature of justice that are based upon determinate or describable criteria. And that presumption is the first step toward totalitarianism and terror, since difference is precluded right from the start. One may argue over the determination of criteria, but once a sufficient consensus has been reached, the suppression of the minority can begin. In contrast, Lyotard argues for a minoritarian politics, a politics that does not presume to establish an alternative authority in political matters. He refuses the notion that the political can be a matter of cognitive description (and thus of determinate judgments), arguing instead for politics as an uncertain process of indeterminate judgment. Justice must not seek to be justified once and for all, must not seek to become authoritative. Rather than trying to say what the political is or should be, to determine the identity of the political, Lyotard insists upon a politics of difference. In this sense, Lyotard's political writings do not attempt to write the political but to engage a politics of writing that will not assume the fixity of authority, will not seek the "last word" characteristic of a Big Brother.

The students of whom Lyotard writes are not simply intellectuals in waiting. Their function in the events of May 1968 is crucially that of refusal, a refusal to understand their intellectual activity as a process of training that would assign them a role within the state, an insistence that they do not know what kind of people they may be, that further study is required. The students are

not simply heroic militants: their militancy challenges the representational claim of democracy, the claim that in a liberal democracy society achieves exhaustive representation, reflects itself to itself. The students motivate a society to rebel *against its own elected representatives*. They do so in the name of an uncertainty about who they are, not in the name of militant certainty. Students enact the sense in which we are and are not part of society; we always function in society before we understand what it means to do so, and we do so until death.

The social predicament of modernity that students expose is one of difference (there are others) and of temporal nonequivalence (deferral). Born too soon, without knowledge, and yet born too late to live that knowledge except as tradition received from elsewhere, students name the temporal predicament of modernity. On the one hand, too soon: they are born into culture, but they still have to learn to speak its language. On the other hand, too late: the culture they are born into precedes them, and they cannot make its anteriority their own, they can only handle the fragments of its language. Students remind us that neither nostalgia nor education can settle accounts with culture as tradition and betrayal: we are handed over to culture even as it is handed to us. Modernism tries to forget this predicament in two ways: by the *conservatism* that says that we can live the tradition (that it is not too late) and by the *progressive modernism* that says we can make an entirely fresh start (that we are not incomplete, we can teach ourselves).

In each case, reactionaries and progressives (of both left and right) talk about culture as if it ought to be, or is, synonymous with society. Reactionaries say that culture ought to provide the model for society, that we should live in a world of high culture, or of organic villages. Culture should determine society. Progressives tend to say that culture is society, or it is ideological illusion. The self-definition of the human community should define the model of our being-together. “We” can make our own salvation. Socially displaced by the strange temporality of education, students provide a critique of the possibility that society might represent itself to itself, might define itself through the autonomous exercise of its own will, the presumption on which the claim to authority made by modern representative democracy is based. As “*Ersiegerungen*” points out, the modernist project of autonomy and universal communicability is not provisionally but fundamentally incomplete: no authority can terminate the pedagogic relation, no knowledge can save us (from) thinking.

A similar sense of debt and obligation to tradition as undermining the Enlightenment claim to freedom through knowledge underpins Lyotard’s writing on the “jews.” Lyotard’s writings on Judaism are not those of an adept, nor are they the product of the nostalgia of a would-be convert. No such conversion is possible (this is not an *alternative* to Christianity). The

“jews” (who are not simply empirical Jewish people) mark a limit to the modern European idea of humanity: resolutely marginal, they refuse to join the universal human race and they cling to a tradition founded on respect for the unrepresentable, for the impossibility of Enlightenment. Authority issues from a position that cannot be occupied by the subject; it is heteronomous. These people simply refuse to become autonomous political subjects. Integration or extermination, the options offered to “jews” by the modern enlightened state, are revealed in their full horror by the event named “Auschwitz,” which brings the Enlightenment project of history as the rational process of realizing the essential autonomy of the human race to an acknowledgment of its irrationality and inhumanity. Auschwitz names a debt from which European humanity cannot be freed, an obligation of atonement that must not be historically rationalized as one event among others in European history. It names the injustice of understanding history as a project of liberating humanity from the past, from tradition, from obligation to the other.

The war of the Algerians is not primarily important to Lyotard as an instance of nationalist struggle for self-determination. The Algerians, he repeatedly insists, are not simply fighting for the right to do to themselves what the French have done to them. Rather, the bloody process of decolonization marks a limit to a modernist and imperialist philosophy of historical progress that is common, under diverse forms, to both left and right. As an affirmation of the local or the particular, the Algerian war throws the universalist pretensions of the nation-state into crisis: the struggle is not merely over whether French colonists or native Algerians should direct the development of the state and society in Algeria. What counts in these writings is the presentation of a war against the presumed neutrality of “progress” and “development,” a struggle not to become the representatives of a process of “universal” human development (capitalist or communist) that has been defined in Europe.

Politics and the State: No Salvation

Marxism, the last shoot stemming from both the Enlightenment and Christianity, seems to have lost all its critical power.

“The Wall, the Gulf, and the Sun”

This resistance to modernist universalism is part of Lyotard’s wider argument against what may be called the politics of redemption. By this term I mean the understanding of politics as the ordering of the political so as to achieve a redeemed society, liberated from historical necessity. The Christians promise

liberation by the Messiah, the Enlightenment proclaims the capacity of rational thought and acquired knowledge to make “man” the master of “his” world and realize mankind’s essential freedom, Marxism argues that the process of history will fulfill itself as the proletariat comes to incarnate human consciousness of its species-being as essentially laboring. In each case, a proper determination of the nature of the political can bring history to an end, redeem humanity from necessity.

Lyotard’s political writings mark a troubled disengagement from the politics of redemption. He speaks of “depoliticization” when he is writing on Algeria, of “antipolitics” in reference to May 1968, of a minoritarian Judaism distinct from imperial history, and elsewhere of paganism and postmodernism. These are all names for the attempt to take a distance from the Enlightenment model of politics as the site of a secular redemption (which is summarized most succinctly in “Tomb of the Intellectual” and “The Wall, the Gulf, and the Sun”). It is characteristic of modernity for politics to be understood as naming the mode of interaction between history and the contemporary. Yet, once one no longer believes that history will save us through political action by producing a transcendent, liberated, and empowered subject, how is one to do anything but despair? These political writings demand that this question should be introduced.

In the note appended to his writings on Algeria, Lyotard refers to a “depoliticization”: the loss of belief in an alternative political truth that will authoritatively legitimate oppositional critique.⁴ This loss of faith in salvation is actualized in the rise of the modern bureaucratic state as an essentially unipolar society. In place of the clash of workers and bosses comes a system that offers to internalize such conflicts. This is not simply a matter of setting up industrial relations tribunals. The “machine” of which Lyotard speaks in “Dead Letter” is an early figure for the complicity between capitalism and the nation-state, a complicity in which the dual functions of expropriation and administration carried out by the French in Algeria provided an object lesson. Lenin is correct to argue that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism in that the administrative role is not a feudal hangover, a duty of care; it is the reformulation of the social bond as an autonomous and unipolar system of representation. As capitalism becomes a global system, power appears as administration not coercion, managerial rather than directly oppressive.

If we sketch the lineaments of the bleakest picture that Lyotard provides, then the primary relation of subjects is to a state in which they participate only at the price of becoming operatives. The emergence of the state thus marks a terminal point for political thought, and it is against this backdrop that politics must be rethought. Rather than the political question being what kind of state can establish the just society and realize

human destiny, the positioning of the state as the unifying horizon for all political representations becomes the stumbling block for a just politics. Consumerism is merely one symptom of this process of the almost complete internalization and reconsumption of the product of the system. That is to say, consumerism is less of an ideological falsification of well-being (bread and circuses) than a mark that no benefit exterior to the system can be imagined, no benefit that would not in its term be subject to cost/benefit analysis (was that vacation a good buy?). The state marks a certain triumph of capitalism, of capitalism as an energetics that seeks to synthesize a profit from differences by reducing them to accountable variations within a homogeneous mode of representation (money). The state does not simply extend the cash nexus, it analogizes its indifferent operation into all aspects of social life. Within this representational system, tribunals regulate social tensions in terms of quantifiable denominators of cost/benefit analysis: money, time in jail, quality time, information exchange, and so forth. The unipolar state is the terminus of modernity as the progressive integration of all possibilities as *representable* for and by the state. The Western state replaces command with communication as the governing ideology of representational consensus. Development and management replace expropriation in its raw form: the social control of capital in liberal democracies is no more than the subjugation of all wealth and power to these twin exigencies of the system.

By contrast, the weakness of socialist central planning lies in its failure to understand the autonomy of the bureaucratic system, its stubborn clinging to the unrealized promise of a society beyond the state. Hence the Marxist version of the state is too inflexible to become all-encompassing: critical energies cannot be harnessed for the improvement of the system's functioning. On the other hand, the unipolar Western state, by presuming the intertranslatability of political forces, turns almost all resistance into a source of energy. All dissidence can be expressed, provided that it allows itself to be represented. Politics ends once the state becomes the sole site where the political is managed, an end in itself. "The Wall, the Gulf, and the Sun" notes the extension of this process to international politics, whereby conflict is internalized under the horizon of the extraterrestrial.

The politics of Lyotard's writings lies in their attempt to rethink the terms of resistance, to find a way to think against a state that has no outside, that seeks always to realize itself as the state of things. As Lyotard notes in his critique of the capitalist-bureaucratic system in his writings on May 1968, the unions have themselves become an apparatus for the governing of the labor force within that system.⁵ Lyotard's abiding distrust of the role of the party is not simply a matter of historical betrayals, of the persistence of Stalinism in France. The cynical calculations of the French

and Algerian Communist parties in seeking to preserve French influence in Algeria as a conduit for their own role is merely a symptom of the more general complicity of radical organizations with the systems they claim to oppose. The party remains entirely within the political structure of representation in that it treats the workers that it claims to represent as nothing but the mute referent of its own discourse. Attacking the *politics of representation* rather than *political representations*, Lyotard argues against the pretension to speak in the name of others as the cornerstone of injustice, be it liberal or totalitarian.

Intellectuals: Speaking for Others

For a long time, in the West, philosophers have been exposed to the temptation of the role of the intellectual, they have been tempted to turn themselves into the representatives of an authority. And there are not many, since Plato, over twenty-five hundred years, who have not succumbed to this temptation. It seems to me that Lyotard would like to belong to this minority; that's what he told me to tell you.

“A Podium without a Podium”

Lyotard’s problem with speaking in the name of others, which runs throughout these texts, has little to do with modesty or shyness. Rather, it is a matter of the pragmatics of discursive legitimization. To pretend to speak *for* the oppressed is to objectify them once more, to make them the referent of one’s own discourse. The argument with the oppressor then concerns the nature of the referent, but not its position in relation to discourse.

This might sound like the prelude to an argument for autonomy, for letting people speak for themselves (at times in the writings on Algeria it seems that way). However, it is more radically an argument against discursive legitimization as such. First, because, as “The Grip” points out, the dream of discursive autonomy is itself founded on a forgetting of debt and obligation to the other. To presume that all people can in principle speak for themselves is a double victimization: it assumes the speaker’s access to discourse and it assumes that the speaker is inherently a potential modern subject. Second, whether one is speaking for oneself or for another, the problem lies in the authority assumed in speaking for, in the name of...Hence the problem is not simply one of paternalism, but of the presumption to authority in politics.

This is the root of Lyotard’s attack on intellectuals, experts, and big brothers. The intellectual is exiled from the particular in order to reach the universal, who is a citizen of the universe, who speaks to everyone and to no one in particular:

It seems to me that “intellectuals” are...thinkers who situate themselves in the position of man, humanity, the nation, the people, the proletariat, the creature, or some such entity, that is, who identify themselves with a subject endowed with a universal value so as to describe and analyze a situation or condition from this point of view and to prescribe what ought to be done in order for this subject to realize itself or at least in order for its realization to progress. The “intellectuals” address each individual insofar as he or she is the repository or the embryo of this entity. (“Tomb of the Intellectual”)

The intellectual, as a modernist creature, rationalizes history by means of abstraction, constructing a grand narrative of the liberation of a subject as self-realization. The end of history is thus the realization of mankind as essentially free from ignorance (Enlightenment), essentially capable of providing for material needs in a free market (capitalism), or essentially laboring (Marxism). Actual events are merely the raw materials for a metadiscursive reflection upon the progress of this narrative of self-realization. Apart from the exile of metalanguage as pure alienation, Lyotard insists that there is another kind of exile—the exile of a Europe whose nationals “emigrate right where they are, become indeterminate” so as to be neither “good villagers” nor “the talented messengers [great communicators?] that the megalopolis claims for its own” (*Ersiegerungen*). Doing this is a process of “working through our rootlessness,” identifying a margin that is not defined by reference to the center, a local exile that is not a rooted dwelling, for all its locality.

This rejection of intellectual authority is perhaps the most difficult thing to preserve in Lyotard’s thinking: does not all writing, even his, contain a de facto presumption to speak authoritatively? So what does it mean to appear on television (“A Podium without a Podium”) to announce, in a voice divided from one’s image, that one is not an intellectual, that one does not pretend to competence and authority in matters of philosophy, that there should be no such competence in such mundane matters as those philosophy treats (love, work, society, health, beauty, justice, etc.)? Lyotard insists that he is not an expert, even if he seems to play one on television. He has no authority to recommend any panacea. Authority would be a legitimate competence to determine meaning or value in those mundane philosophical matters that make up everyday life. And in the name of that competence, that privileged access to the referent, discourse is legitimated: this is the meaning of the referent, for any and all addressees. To speak for others in politics is the pretension to speak for all, to achieve a discourse that is proof against pragmatics. And in the discursive pragmatics of this phrasing we have a little domination effect in miniature: the speaker effaces the addressee, legitimating

himself or herself only in relation to the referent and the signification attached to it. This effect becomes terroristic at the point where addressee and referent are the same: when the intellectual (speaker) is telling x (addressee) what is good (signification) for x (referent). Insofar as the determination of the referent's signification is presumed to be authoritative, the addressee can only speak in his or her turn *in conformity with* that description, as the referent of the intellectual's discourse. The problem of speaking for others, in their name, is more generally the problem of the claim to exclusive authority over effects of reference, the claim to determine a given political meaning that serves to eradicate the possibility of politics.

These writings owe their politics to their persistent refusal to privilege political meaning—a finality external to political pragmatics—or even to historicize political *effects*. To historicize a political effect is to translate pragmatics into a language of meaning. As I have remarked in attempting to resist the temptation of biography, the historical perspective is the means by which the intellectual can determine the meaning of political events. This is the root of Lyotard's refusal, in "March 23," to write a history book on the events of May 1968, his insistence on an "antihistory" as the only way to speak on the day after the movement of March 22. No external standard will permit political calculation: there is no universal language of political meaning in which the signification of all referents can be authoritatively determined. Rather, politics is the struggle to witness to the dissensus among the different languages that political discourse seeks to homogenize.

An Endless Politics

The nature of this struggle shifts in the course of Lyotard's writings: the far leftist appeal to spontaneous popular resistance comes to be replaced by a focus on judgment and witness. Resistance becomes less a mode of redemption, a metaphysics that counterposes desire, poetry, or popular will to dominant representations, than a form of attention, a minor process⁶ of reading or listening that evokes an unaccountable or intractable differend with representation, "which forbids any reconciliation of the parties in the idiom of either one of them" ("The Differend"). In "Dead Letter," we might still think that poetry can save us from the machine. In the writings on May 1968, it seems that desire can breach the dominant mode of discursive representation, erupt in a way that cannot be channelled by the capitalist-bureaucratic state. The turn to Judaism and to the differend decisively rejects the possibility of an alternative epistemological ground for political critique, shifts resistance away from oppositionality to difference. Politics becomes a matter of justice, of handling differences, rather than of establishing truth or even countertruth.⁷

Thus, giving up a redemptive politics means ceasing to believe that the political can be a locus of healing, of solutions. The end of the political as the site where humankind works out its meaning or destiny means that politics will not come to an end. This loss of faith only gives rise to cynical inactivity for those who remain within the perspective of redemption. Lyotard's vitriolic critiques of the state, the party, and "big politics" in general can thus be linked to the philosophical rejection of a politics based on models of the perfect society (be they Plato's or Marx's) that is familiar from *Just Gaming*.⁸ What is perhaps more pointed in these writings than in *Just Gaming* is a sense of how those models work (in the lives of workers, the colonized, and young people) and how those oppressed by political models can at times resist them without recourse to other, supposedly better, models. Modeling, for all its glamour, is always exploitative.

It is exploitative because the political model remains pious, religious in its promise of a hereafter: submit to your bosses in the factory, the home, or the party now, and all will be well later on. All will be well because politics will have come to an end. What Lyotard's writings, on the contrary, promulgate is not so much the heroic militancy of a refusal to submit as a refusal to think that politics will come to an end. The time of "big politics," the idea of the political as the site where humanity struggles to define its destiny and realize its meaning, may well have passed. That is what Lyotard means by "depoliticization": humankind's representation of itself to itself is no longer primarily political, the business of a party or a state. But this is not because politics has stopped; it is precisely because we no longer believe that it will ever come to an end, that it will ever fulfill that self-representation. Once politics is no longer the sphere in which meaning is to be worked out, politics ceases to be the search for an identity, a redemptive significance that might lie behind or beyond the activities of everyday life. Rather, politics is the attempt to handle conflicts that admit of no resolution, to think justice in relation to conflict and difference.

Thus Marxism is to be honored for its evocation of the differend of exploitation that underlies the supposed equity of the wage-labor transaction, for realizing that labor is not bought or exchanged but enslaved in the capitalist system. Capitalist exchange, as Lyotard does not cease to point out, victimizes by virtue of the presumption of exchangeability that underlies its representational system. The worker becomes, for him- or herself, a unit of value in the system of the other. Yet for Lyotard, alienation is not reducible to an ideological falsification, a flawed representation. Indeed, it is the Marxist desire to identify alienation as a reversible ideological distortion that grounds its pious faith in the possibility of emancipation. The problem lies with the understanding of politics as the struggle for, rather than against, representation. A minoritarian politics does not seek to take its place in big politics, to gain

representation in parliament, for example. The minoritarian, the “jew,” the gypsy, and the native American insist upon their differend with the representational system of parliamentary politics as such. They respect external authorities (Yahweh, tradition, ancestors, future generations, etc.), they do not seek to speak for themselves as autonomous subjects communicating with other autonomous subjects, they seek to respond to those authorities. Their refusal of parliament is not made in the name of a better kind of parliament that might include everyone in a larger consensus, but in order to testify to their differend with the Western discourse of universal humanity, with the rule of representation in which silence equals death. The differend announces itself by a heard silence, the sense that something is trying to be said that cannot be phrased. The speechless witness of the Auschwitz survivor, which insists that the *Shoah* be remembered as *unspeakable*, imposes a refusal of the communicational ideology of political modernity. The events to which these writings witness are political insofar as they displace representational systems in this way.

The possibility of politics lies in actions and desires that are sensible only as *heard silences*, traces of radical dissensus within modes and structures of political representation, social communication, or economic accounting. Lyotard’s displacement of modernity is an insistence that these differences are not accidentally but structurally repressed by the modernist drive to transparency in representation, communication, and accounting, by the dream of a self-regulating autonomy.

The difficult question is how to take a distance from modernist pieties without presuming to escape the predicament of modernity for either a new modernity or a return to the premodern, without counterposing a pious nostalgia for the grounded experience of a home, of dwelling, of premodernist rootedness (Heidegger). Nor is Lyotard aiming at the critical detachment, the transvalued cynicism, of a postmodern cool (Baudrillard). Here, political writing is a matter of thinking modernity against modernism, against attempts to render the predicament of modernity the locus of a determinate historical project for the realization of a universal subject.

And these writings insistently remind us that emancipation (Kant’s “man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity”) is nothing other than alienation in its purest form, the identification of freedom with self-domination, which is also the terrorization of all those who do not participate in saying “we.”⁹ As “The General Line” reminds us, there is a “no-man’s land,” like the “grip” of the debt to an unthinkable Other by which we are preceded, that haunts and prevents any such attempt to reduce the subject to a pure point of self-consciousness. Rather than counter partial alienation with a total (and thus transparent) alienation, Lyotard argues that humanity does not have an origin that it can grasp so as to become fully self-conscious, an empowered identity.

Humanity does not have a birthright over which it might once more exercise control, be it a human nature or an essential human difference from nature (culture). Rather, Lyotard speaks of the soul (and of psychoanalysis, the analysis of the soul) to name a deep uncertainty about the position of the human between nature and culture, between heteronomous tradition and autonomy, between the inhuman and the human. The Freudian unconscious is crucial here, once the attempt to historicize it through identification with the working class has been abandoned.¹⁰ What Lyotard realizes is that the repressed does not return in historical time, and thus cannot be assigned a determinate signification. With the end of redemption and a sense of the radical intractability of differends, we come closer to a feminist than to a Marxist politics, given that feminism insists upon sexual difference without seeking to *resolve* it.¹¹ Gender difference imposes a differend; we are obligated by a difference that we cannot master. Testifying to this difference does not mean overcoming it by achieving communication between the genders, it means an alert or respectful acknowledgment of the impossibility and necessity of exchange, around a differend that is sensed but that cannot be expressed in a shared idiom, over which no final agreement can be reached. The obligation to remain alert to and respectful of voices that we cannot hear clearly cannot be lifted. That is the condition of politics, of the struggle to handle differends justly. As Lyotard remarks, “Something like this occurred in 1968, and has occurred in the women’s movement for ten years... There are other cases” (“The Differend”). There will be other cases, and they will demand other political moves, if we are to seek to do them justice. Readers of these political writings will find no authoritative maxims here to protect them from facing that obligation.

Part I

Intellectuals

1

Tomb of the Intellectual (1983)

The spokesperson of the socialist government calls on “the intellectuals” to open the debate on the “transformation” France requires in order to “catch up” in economic and social matters. He specifies, however, that he would like “concrete involvement in thinking” rather than “big names talking publicly about engagement.”¹

What exactly does he mean by “intellectuals”? His appeal is really an appeal for ideas people, experts, decision makers. Of course it is an appeal for intelligences, but for intelligences who take on or will have to take on administrative, economic, social, and cultural responsibilities, or for intelligences who at least debate or will debate the aforementioned “transformation” without losing sight of these responsibilities. Yet it seems to me that “intellectuals” are more like thinkers who situate themselves in the position of man, humanity, the nation, the people, the proletariat, the creature, or some such entity. That is to say, they are thinkers who identify themselves with a subject endowed with a universal value so as to describe and analyze a situation or a condition from this point of view and to prescribe what ought to be done in order for this subject to realize itself, or at least in order for its realization to progress. The “intellectuals” address each individual insofar as each is the repository or the embryo of this entity. Their statements refer to and arise from the individual according to the same rule. The responsibility of “intellectuals” is inseparable from the (shared) idea of a universal subject. It alone can give Voltaire, Zola, Péguy, Sartre (to stay within the confines of France) the authority that has been accorded to them. Max Gallo’s appeal thus suffers from a confusion of responsibilities. He ignores the dissociations that are the basic principle of the task of intelligence, and that also to some extent ground the *de facto* divisions between professions today.

New technologies, essentially linked to the technosciences of language, along with the concentration of civil, economic, social, and military administrations, have changed the nature of intermediary and higher

occupational tasks and have attracted numerous thinkers trained in the hard sciences, high technology, and the human sciences.

These new cadres are not intellectuals as such. The professional exercise of their intelligence is not directed toward the fullest possible embodiment of the universal subject in the domain of their competence, but to the achievement of the best possible performance in that domain. This performance is defined by the best input/output (cost/benefit) ratio relative to an operation. It is a technical criterion in the fullest sense (including financing, time gained or lost, the evaluation of the operation by a public, etc.). Thinkers engaged in such responsibilities can and probably must be led to invent new mechanisms. In this sense they assuredly investigate what works best in their domains. But they question neither the limits of these domains nor the nature of “performance,” in the way that a subject that has a vocation to universality necessarily does. They accept the received compartmentalization of realities and the received criterion for the evaluation of actions.

I am simplifying, obviously. The proliferation of new technologies continually destabilizes this compartmentalization. But the fact remains that when a writer, an artist, a scholar, or a philosopher takes on this kind of responsibility, she or he accepts ipso facto the conditions of that responsibility: the need to get results in the assigned domain. The same thing goes for cultural tasks. One directs a cultural center, a department in the culture ministry, one participates in a committee granting aid to the arts: whether one is a great dramatist or a great painter, as someone in charge of culture one has to stick to a completely different kind of task than that of “creation.” The very idea of cultural activity, of cultural “stimulation,” presupposes that the addressee (the public, the user) lacks knowledge, taste, sensibility, lacks the means of expression and needs to be educated. In the first place, the public has to be won over, seduced, and so forth (unlike what takes place in teaching). Success in the management of culture is determined in principle in terms of results, in terms of changes in the behavior of addressees that are judged to be positive. The problem of quantifying these results is another question.

The only responsibility of artists, writers, or philosophers as such is a responsibility toward the question What is painting, writing, thought? If anyone says to them, “Your work is for the most part unintelligible,” they have the right, they have the duty, not to take any notice of the objection. Their addressee is not the public and, I would say, is not even the “community” of artists, writers, and so forth. To tell the truth, they do not know who their addressee is, and this is what it is to be an artist, a writer, and so forth: to throw a “message” out into the void. Nor do they have any better idea of who their judge is, because in doing what they do, they also question the accepted criteria of judgment in painting, literature, and so forth. And the

same goes for the limits that define recognized domains, genres, and disciplines. Let us say that they experiment. They in no way seek to cultivate, educate, or train anyone at all. Anything that pushes them to locate their activities within the game quite rightly appears as unacceptable.

All the same, they are not “intellectuals.” They do not need to identify with a universal subject and take on the responsibilities of the human community in order to take on responsibility for “creation.” (In inverted commas to protest against the connotations of Christian theology and romantic aesthetics that remain attached to this word. Will we ever find the proper term to designate an activity that is essentially dispossessed and dispossessing?) On the contrary, the revolution in theoretical physics achieved by Einstein and the Danes has helped to disrupt the modern idea of a universal subject (and an object) of knowledge. The Futurists’ investigations were of course adapted to an ideology, that of fascism, but it should be acknowledged that fascism was not an indispensable element in those investigations. When Apollinaire writes that artists nowadays should make themselves inhuman, he clearly means that avant-garde movements are not initiated by the “intellectuals,” who are too human. *Return from the USSR* is the work of an “intellectual” (or perhaps a citizen-writer), *The Counterfeeters* the work of a “creator”; to judge the two books in the same light because they are by the same author would be a denial of justice to each of them. The link between the two is not a weak one; it simply does not exist.

Although the same person can indeed fill two or three functions—indeed, cases of this have been observed (Malraux, for example)—these functions are not any less heterogenous to each other in all their aspects. Nor is this the end of the matter. This person is also a citizen who enjoys the rights and exercises the responsibilities of everyday citizens. These responsibilities concern the question, What is the best mode of coexistence and how can it be achieved? This question differs completely from those that govern the activity of an intellectual, of a cadre or of a “creator.” Nonetheless, it also requires the activity of intelligence.

But of course the assumption of responsibilities concerning the idea of a universal subject or concerning administrative, cultural, or other decisions, or even concerning “creative” activity, does not lend any particular authority to the holder of these responsibilities when it come to his or her task as a citizen. For nothing proves that optimal performance defines the best mode of coexistence or even contributes to it. Nor that “creativity” for its part is beneficial to the civic community or that “creators” have particular insights to communicate to that community. Nor, finally, that the point of view of universality is appropriate to the elaboration and resolution of the questions posed to a citizen of a particular country at a particular moment.

There is still always a great temptation to put the renown earned in the exercise of one of these responsibilities to the service of another. It is probably this kind of transfer that people in general, and Max Gallo in particular, expect from the “intellectuals.” It is in effect this kind of transfer that characterizes intellectuals as such. This encroachment only ceases to be a confusion and an unjustified usurpation on one condition: that a universalizing thought, the only one the “intellectual” can take pride in, can arrange the different responsibilities to which I have referred in relation to each other in a system or at least according to a common purpose. Now it is precisely this totalizing unity, this universality, that thought has lacked since at least the middle of the twentieth century.

To put it bluntly, one can be an “intellectual” without dishonor only if the wrong lies entirely on one side, if the victims are victims and the torturers inexcusable, if in the world of names that forms our history, some at least shine like pure ideas, spotless (Frederick II for Kant). It was in this sense that Marx denounced the “pure and simple wrong” done to the worker by the condition of wage slavery. His indictment was authorized by a universal subject to come, which would organize all the aforementioned responsibilities, including those of the thinker, to a single end, the emancipation of the proletariat. The Paris Commune was the (almost) transparent name that embodied this end. This authority has disappeared, not only because of the real nature of the USSR, a representative appointed by the emancipated proletariat, but primarily because the signs that could legitimate the thought of such a subject have become more and more hard to find. Judge for yourselves: the most important of these signs, perhaps the only one, in Marx’s eyes as for the Bolsheviks, was the international solidarity of the workers...

The same goes for the thought of the Enlightenment, which has animated liberal politics for a century. It has become obsolete. One can judge its condition by considering the state of education, which was its strong point, in the most advanced societies. The “intellectuals” who made up the *Aufklärer* and their nineteenth-century heirs thought that propagating education would strengthen the freedom of the citizen, would get rid of political sectarianism, would hinder wars. Today no one expects teaching, which is discredited everywhere, to train more enlightened citizens—only professionals who perform better. Such is the officially formulated objective of French reform of undergraduate education. Ignorance is no longer a tort, and the acquisition of knowledge is a professional qualification that promises a better salary.

There ought no longer to be “intellectuals,” and if there are any, it is because they are blind to this new fact in Western history since the eighteenth century: there is no universal subject-victim, appearing in reality, in whose

name thought could draw up an indictment that would be at the same time a “conception of the world” (look for names). Even “the most disadvantaged,” whose point of view Sartre sought to espouse in order to guide himself through the labyrinth of injustices, was only, when all is said and done, a negative, anonymous, and empirical entity. I am not saying that there is no need to get involved in the fate of the most disadvantaged: ethical and civic responsibility demand that one should. But this point of view only allows defensive and local interventions. Extended beyond such interventions, it can mislead thought as it misled Sartre’s.

Max Gallo will not find what he is looking for. What he is looking for belongs to another age. My conclusion is not, however, that painters paint, that philosophers philosophize, that scientists do research, that managers manage, that the organizers cultivate, and that politicians (of whom I did not speak on purpose, so as not to embarrass Max Gallo) do politics. My conclusion is rather “optimistic” in principle, even if it seems to be “pessimistic” in fact (but these notions themselves come from the Enlightenment). The decline, perhaps the ruin, of the universal idea can free thought and life from totalizing obsessions. The multiplicity of responsibilities, and their independence (their incompatibility), oblige and will oblige those who take on those responsibilities, small or great, to be flexible, tolerant, and svelte. These qualities will cease to be the contrary of rigor, honesty, and force; they will be their signs. Intelligences do not fall silent, they do not withdraw into their beloved work, they try to live up to this new responsibility, which renders the “intellectuals” troublesome, impossible: the responsibility to distinguish intelligence from the paranoia that gave rise to “modernity.”

2

The Differend

(1982)

The socialists' victory did not thrill me.¹ I said to myself: perhaps they lied during their campaign and will behave like good children in following the same line as Raymond Barre—increasing public spending on “social” programs by 3 percent of the gross national product, an increase to be covered by the national debt, a little inflation, income tax, and every available means of protecting employers. Thus by 1988 or 1995, the international competitiveness of French firms will not be seriously weakened, and at the same time society's problems will remain unchanged. Or perhaps they did not lie to their electors, and they are going to introduce a neo-Keynesian economic program, a “welfare state” with a dash of self-management; given both the international structure of production and the market and the already low level of productive investment that currently exists, the socialists will clash head-on with hostile owners and managers of capital, they will have to give up after two years, once they have lost the confidence of their electoral constituency, and the hour of Jacques Chirac will have come.²

Yet I was wrong. Rather than adopting either policy wholeheartedly, they have gone in for a little of both, and the result will be the algebraic equation of certain advantages and disadvantages inherent in the two policies.

These calculations are not, and never were, the product of disillusionment. Their logic is that of capital. After thirty years of expansion, it has entered a new phase of overcapitalization, with both the customary effects and some new ones, which has given rise to both the usual remedies and some attempts at new ones. Among the habitual remedies, war, the most effective of them all, seems to have taken a new lease on life in Washington and Moscow, for different but complementary reasons. The logic of capital is essentially the logic of *Capital*, without its dialectical framework. By this I do not mean that there are no contradictions in the functioning of the capitalist economy but only that nothing results from these contradictions that signifies or announces the obsolescence of capitalism.

To move to true socialism, to an economy freed from the law of value, it is not enough merely to find the contradictions produced by that law unbearable; you have to recognize them for what they are and want to uproot them. This consciousness and this will are called the subject of history, the proletariat, in the Marxist tradition. Now, after a hundred years of its great moment, the history of the revolutionary movement has provided ample proof that this subject has not arisen, and it is reasonable to think that it will not arise.

One might as well say that there is no global alternative to capitalism, no alternative within the framework of a dialectical thought and a revolutionary politics, that is. It follows that in the coming crisis the stake will not be socialism (humanity taking control of its ends and its means) but the extension of capitalist relations of production to countries currently under bureaucratic control.

This is not to say that there is no society that can contradict the logic of capital. The success of the socialists in France is a proof of its reality. For Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Raymond Barre, authentic figures of capital, this society was only a moment in the reproduction of capital, the moment of the restructuring of the useful labor force and hence exclusively one of productive consumption. It happens that this society is also the constitutional sovereign, and that it has persecuted those who despised it. But what does the sovereign want, by way of respect?

The counselors of the sovereign soon came to find it capricious. It wants everything all at once. To give it what we can, let's reform. In this way, the absence of the suspicion of contempt for the monarch one serves allows one to assume the monarch's role. But there is no way of despising the sovereign people nor of replacing it if one thinks that it does not exist. Universal suffrage does not imply the universal subject, but exactly the contrary. Society is traversed by conflicts of interest that oppose "social partners"; the sovereign ballot box indicates in which partner's favor these conflicts should be settled. This system, which has become a banality, gives reformist politics its material.

But there is something else. "Society," as one says, is inhabited by differends. I would say that there is a differend between two parties when the "settlement" of the conflict that opposes them appears in the idiom of one of them while the tort from which the other suffers cannot signify itself in this idiom. Contracts and agreements between economic partners do not prevent—on the contrary they presuppose—that the workers (or their representatives) have had to and will have to speak of their labor (and make their labor speak) as if it were the temporary cession of a commodity of which they were the owners. Even when they discuss whether the conditions of this cession are just or unjust and when they act so as to modify those

conditions, they must always keep quiet about the fact that their labor is no such cession (and not only because they cannot do otherwise).³

With the logic of *Capital*, the aspect of Marxism that remains alive is, at least, this sense of the differend, which forbids any reconciliation of the parties in the idiom of either one of them. Something like this occurred in 1968, and has occurred in the women's movement for ten years, and the differend underlies the question of the immigrant workers. There are other cases.

The intelligentsia is not sparing with its support, its advice, its participation in the new power. It certainly has an activity of reform to accomplish, as is already apparent in matters of culture, justice, teaching, and research. Rightly or wrongly (in what idiom would one debate it?), I believe that the activities of thought have another vocation: that of bearing witness to differends.

When a Samuel Beckett writes his books without caring whether they are understood, when a Jerome Lindon dares to publish them, and when the ministry passes a law that allows one to find them in bookstores, this is how a testimony to the differend in literature can find its addressees. The same thing holds, mutatis mutandis, for a painter, a filmmaker, a musician, a philosopher, a dramatist, a scientist. This is not to say that they need not bother themselves with the means of reaching their addressees, and hence need not take part in the working out of a "cultural policy" (a terrifying expression, all the same). They should not forget, however, that politics is only business and culture is only tradition unless both of them are worked over by a sense of the differend, which, moreover, is nobody's special prerogative.

3

For a Cultural Nonpolicy

(1981)

1. The “fact” is that the Socialist party dominates French political institutions.¹ But the direction that it will impose upon the activities of the country, in the context of an extremely tight world market, is not a “fact.” A possibly significant part of the electoral majority expects the restoration of the welfare state by the Socialist party. Yet Keynesianism is simply impossible in the present state of imperialism. And there is no organized political movement on the international scale that provides an alternative to imperialism, as thirty years of the world history of communism teaches us. The new regime in France is an alternation within the framework of international capitalism. Thus it must follow the neoliberal policy of supporting competitive sectors of activity, which allow foreign trade to be balanced and the currency to be defended, while providing some satisfaction to the social strata that elected it. Thus I expect this satisfaction to be meager.

2. You seem to accept it as a “fact” that the new government has a “cultural policy.” The institution of cultural policy has its historic horizon in the century (1880–1970) in which large political parties, organized in a military-industrial fashion, fought over the “masses” (that is, classes broken up by the development of industrial capitalism) with a view to winning the battle against decadence (imputed to this or that enemy, according to the case). “Culture” is the mind considered as a component of the forces at work in this battle. With cultural policy, the mind passes into the domain of the political bureaus and ministerial cabinets. This “strategy making” begins with German social democrats at the end of the nineteenth century. It continues (according to contrary but homogenous modalities) with the “cultural policies” of fascism, nazism, Stalinism, Francoism, Castroism, Maoism. At the end of this century of party-states, it would be intelligent, it would be something new, to put an end to this institution. It consecrates the decadence of the mind that it is supposed to combat: it subordinates all its activities to the production of an identity, whether national, historical, popular, class, or of blood, or one

composed of a little of each. Now, the mind has nothing to do with this fixing upon a figure of this kind, even that of humanity. (The pilgrimage to the Pantheon was disturbing, in this respect, as was its staging [*mise en scène*] on television. Not all that different from that summit of cultural narcissism, the Paris-Paris exhibition.)

3. Of course, capitalism also has its “policy” for culture, which is no less alienating for being more insidious. It selects the activities of the mind according to criteria of good performance: the value of a book is judged by its sales figures, the value of a curriculum by the number of students registered, the value of a television program by the ratings, of a scientific invention by its technological spin-offs, and so forth. It doesn’t take a massive institution to counter this process—a few laws or decrees concerning key points, those at which the law of the market threatens to submerge the freedom of the mind (the law on the unitary pricing [*prix unique*] of books is one such defense), suffice. And this mechanism should not discourage investment, but attract it, not by offering the hope of profit, but by appealing to a motive that seems sadly foreign to French owners and managers of capital (unlike their peers elsewhere): the glory that can be added to their name by the foundation of an institute, a chair, a public lecture, a scholarship, a society, an endowment, a cultural center. Here too, new and more encouraging legislation is to be desired.

4. You seem to admit as a “fact” that “intellectuals,” and others, are professionals who have to make their claims count. But a profession sells a product or a service that can be defined by its use, and hence can in principle be assessed. The legitimacy of its claims can be measured by this yardstick. The activities of someone in the theater or the cinema, of a writer, a comedian, a scholar, even of a teacher, cannot be measured in this way, especially nowadays. His or her “culture”—since Joyce, Cage, Frampton, Duchamp, Bohr, Artaud, May 1968—belongs more to the capacity to question and experiment with his or her activities than to make them conform to received and transmissible paradigms. This “culture” has never been so “philosophical.” Now not only would Socrates fail before the CSCU,² he would have difficulty obtaining funds for the project. How does one evaluate the utility of the service provided by a question or a proposition? If there is a claim to be made, it is that “intellectuals” and others should be allowed the freedom to question all their activities. It is not their task, but that of the legislative body, to determine the percentage of the gross national product that ought to be devoted to financing them. This percentage will in any case be insufficient because the mind is infinity. But it matters that local “cultural” collectives (the university, the school, the laboratory, the museum, the theater,

the conservatory, etc.; without prejudice to the redefinition of local entities should also have the freedom to question the use to be made of the funding corresponding to the “budget” accorded by public authorities (and of the funds it may obtain from private sources). An arrangement that might favor such independence would perhaps be that the authority distributing the funds should itself be local (regional, for example, in the framework of decentralization). The region’s accounting office would check the use made of these funds (only to see that there was no embezzlement). I am not an administrator; here I have in mind what ought to serve as a model of this cultural nonpolicy: the constant, brilliant, and popular initiatives of the Italian municipalities and local groups concerning the activities of the mind.

4

New Technologies (1982)

1. The question of industrial strategies appropriate to the present situation must be fully asked. The variables at work are not only technology, industrial production, and the economic crisis. The very notion that each has an *impact* on the other is still too crude.
2. The human universe concerned is that of the most developed societies. As for the question asked (the impact of new technologies on industrial strategies in the context of the crisis),¹ this universe can be characterized *grosso modo* as one governed by a mixed economy of a strong technoscientific character. This characterization allows identification of four domains in which the variables pertinent to our question are to be found: the scientific, the technical, the economic, and that of the state.
3. Each of these domains, which is closely interwoven with the others, is distinguished only insofar as each domain is governed by a different Idea:² the scientific is governed by the Idea of the best knowledge, the technical by that of optimum performance (the best input/output ratio), the economic by the Idea of the highest wealth, the state by the Idea of the best being-together.³ Each of these Ideas is an absolute toward which one has to work. The Idea has a regulatory function for the discourses and actions occurring in each of the aforementioned domains.
4. The responsibilities incurred by agents in the various domains differ. Einstein has a responsibility to knowledge, Roosevelt has a responsibility in relation to being-together, Rockefeller has a responsibility in relation to wealth, Wiener has a responsibility in relation to performance. Their phrases and their acts ask to be evaluated according to the criterion that corresponds to the regulatory Idea of their proper domain.⁴
5. In the present epoch, science and technology combine to form contemporary

technoscience. In technoscience, technology plays the role of furnishing the proof of scientific arguments: it allows one to say of a scientific utterance that claims to be true, "here is a case of it." The result of this is a profound transformation in the nature of knowledge. Truth is subjected to more and more sophisticated means of "falsifying" scientific utterances.

6. The economic domain (that is, capital) and the domain of the state combine (essentially in order to get out of the second great crisis of overcapitalization in the 1930s). The result is the contemporary mixed economy with its giant national and multinational firms, and the banker states, clients, and bosses.

7. On the basis of this double combination, technoscience falls under the hegemony of the states and the companies: "military," space, nuclear, biological, linguistic, and sociopsychological budgets. This subordination develops in the United States during the Second World War and in the world during the periods of reconstruction and rapid expansion.

8. The aforementioned regulatory Ideas are then grouped into a vast complex: to know in order to be able to perform; to be able to perform in order to be rich; to be rich in order to be together well, to be able to perform, to know. Industrial strategies are then incorporated without question into the functioning of closed systems governed by autoregulatory mechanisms of feedback and foreseeable growth. It is possible to believe that humanity is in the process of emerging from economic prehistory.

9. This is the way in which the reconstruction of national or zonal economies took place after the Second World War. It came to an end around 1955, to be supplanted by regular rapid growth over a twenty-year period. At that time, the world market reconstituted itself, to be finally glutted by an enormous accumulation of capital. Overcapitalization brought with it a fall in the incentive to invest, in the middle of the seventies, to which were added the energy crisis and a crisis in the complex of regulatory Ideas during the sixties, which asked, What is the end of knowledge? This is the question of scientists, students, and teachers. Must one seek to perform at the price of the destruction of "nature" or the environment? Is good being-together possible in the closed system of labor and consumption?

10. What is called the impact of the new technologies intervened in the context of these destabilizations, in this uncertainty over regulatory Ideas.

11. Essentially, the new technologies concern language. They are in continuity with prior technologies in that they substitute automata for natural agents

(humans, animals, etc.). They are different in that the substitution bears on sequences previously carried out by the higher nervous centers (cortex). They suppose the analysis of operating sequences, their encoding into artificial languages, the constitution of artificial memories, the training of automata obeying orders given in this language.

12. Language treated in this way is informational: it is made up of messages going from a sender to a receiver, both of whom are in possession of the same code (with or without translation). Information occurs only when the message responds to a question issued in the first place by the current addressee. The question is formulated in binary terms (yes or no, 1/0). The information is evaluated in terms of probability (between 1 and 0). It can be calculated. Its cost can be figured. Science, technology, and economy find a common measure of knowledge, power, and price in information.

13. This recentering of the three domains around the informational paradigm occurs mainly in terms of the following aspects:

- the intrinsic exteriorization of knowledge in relation to the knower: the introduction of fragmented activities and strongly hierarchized organization in research, and the laboratory become industrial workshop;
- an increased technological component in the formation of knowledge: the new machines (particle accelerators, supercomputers, electronic telescopes, lasers), their servants, their schedules of availability, the tasks of management, and the new kinds of research they require;
- the spread of automata to the so-called tertiary sectors of production: the “elevation” of qualifications (new métiers), specialization in the tasks of the “employees,” of the “inferior and average ranks of management,” of the “ideas people” and “decision makers”;
- the multiplication of commodities with integrated automata and, more generally, with an integrated language (the logical language of microprocessors) used in both production and consumption.

14. Certain effects of “informatization” can be noted in each of the three domains:

14.1. There is an increased concentration in the means of the production of knowledge. This is in principle compatible with their decentralization. To respond to this concentration, an increased intervention of the states or large firms or both in the production of knowledge is foreseeable and already observable. For example, just calculate the research budget of the developed countries. Considerable amounts of capital are frozen in

investments in long-term research materials whose obsolescence is difficult to calculate.

14.2. In the technosocial domain, we see technological unemployment, the extension of the average training time of the work force, increases in its cost, the reorganization of the curriculum according to criteria of performance rather than of culture, and a reduction in the length of necessary working time. There are costs inherent in this set of effects—an increased devaluation of productive labor occurs.

14.3. A slow transformation can be observed in the relationship to wealth. The issue of “statutory surplus value” linked to the consumer society declines along with the demand for objects associated with this way of life. Objects of all technological levels that allow and encourage the individual initiative of the user become of interest: computer and information-processing games, for example, or questions posed to “home terminals.” Dispersal of the horizons of everyday life.

15. As for state control, the technologies of language touch its domain in regard to all aspects of its responsibility for the Idea of being-together: the multiplication of organizations for management and administration (ministers, agencies, missions); the constitution of memories (files, archives, etc.); the relationship to the new media; and so forth. The important fact is this: in handling language, the new technologies directly handle the social bond, being-together. They make it more independent of traditional regulation by institutions, and more directly affected by knowledge, technology, and the marketplace. Confidence in the establishment and in the representatives of the institution (notables, parties, syndicates, ideologies, etc.) declines. The values that are associated with the institutions also decline. A certain cultural availability, and a curiosity for experimentation, perhaps increase. One can hope, at least, for some advance in material culture (be it only in the form of a search for “quality”) and perhaps even in the culture of the individual will (a slow recession in the “welfare” mentality).

16. In this respect, state control encounters a considerable challenge. It is not asked to induce faith, to reinforce existing units (ideological, social, etc.), but to advance material culture and the culture of the mind and will.

Example 1: The monopolies of state control are perceived as obstacles to initiative or opacities in communicational exchange (free radio stations, autonomy of the universities, experiments in uncontrolled fields of research).

Example 2: Cultural policies are not expected to be conceived on the model of totalitarianisms (German social democracy of the end of the nineteenth century, communism, nazism, etc.), but on the model of allowing free

experimentation. There is a simultaneous need for less state (totalitarian) and more state (public service).

17. What can industrial strategy be in this technological context and in that of the crisis?⁵ It would be necessary to direct efforts not only toward the high-tech sectors, but also toward the high-tech sectors of high tech. By this I mean not only to multiply the applications of the informational treatment of language, but also to support research on the postinformational treatment of language.

For example, R.Thorn writes, “An order contains no information.” Informational treatment only takes into account phrases that describe a “reality.” But language contains many other families of phrases that obey different regimes and require other methods of analysis. For example, the four Ideas initially cited are not descriptions of realities, but regulatory Ideas (containing a prescription). It would moreover be necessary to find a way to give citizens the means of calculating the “costs” of the ideas they cherish: “If you want this, then these are the implications.” This study would have to be undertaken at the highest level of complexity (the economic, fiscal, social, familial, and even the affective cost).

As for the crisis, once the energy problem has been resolved, the potential “market” opened by the new technologies is immense, because language is potentially an infinity of phrases, even if it is true that each of the language machines contains on average little invested capital. But the niche, so to speak, that French industries would have to occupy would be that of enlarging and making more complex the treatment of language (postinformational and postcommunicational)—for example, the analysis, the formalization, the committing to memory of persuasive rhetorics, of “musics,” of inscriptions of movement (kineographic techniques, such as kinetic holography), and so forth. Hence, a strategy of patents and sophisticated equipment “ready to use” that would have to go alongside a politics of a concerted reduction in the legal working day on an international scale.

5

Wittgenstein “After” (1983)

One can love a thought. One is not for all that a specialist in this thought, nor capable of explaining it to others. One does not make of it a profession or a vocation. It is “only” a feeling. A feeling is like a phrase waiting to be formulated. One feels that one is thinking (even if only a little) “after” this thought. One must, one will have to, link onto it. One tries to find a way. This “after” is not yet fixed. What is certain is that this thought will be taken into account, and one will be accountable to it.

These linkages have always occurred. They mark out paths of affinity, which become fixed in traditions. Aristotle thinks “after” the Sophists, Kant after the crisis of Leibnizian rationalism and of the grounding of law, after Hume and Rousseau. Wittgenstein is a solitary thinker. Of course, he thinks “after” Frege, Russell, logical positivism, and no doubt after Schopenhauer and Spengler. But his solitude is marked in that he also thinks “after” himself. The publication of the *Tractatus* in 1921 announced a brilliant philosopher of logic and mathematics. Published two years after his death, in 1953, the *Investigations* witness to the fact that he had taken another direction. It is easy to see that the *Investigations* link onto the *Tractatus*, but the manner of their linkage could not have been foreseen. Russell is dropped; Wittgenstein links onto Wittgenstein, with some inclination to disavow the latter (the earlier Wittgenstein, that is). A solitude that isn’t concerned about “the oeuvre.” What comes after displaces what preceded it.

He is not solitary because he ignores the world and his time, but rather because he does not ignore them. It is often those who think in groups who ignore them. Groups serve this purpose. But the finest listening requires some silence, a screening of large numbers of “well known” things by minuscule worries. From his hut in Norway, his cottage in Ireland, his room in Trinity College, Cambridge, where he gives a course, if one can call it that, to five or six students, but also from the trenches in the Dolomites in 1917 and the Newcastle medical laboratory in 1943, this Viennese from the beginning of the century continues to sense the malaise of his time. Nietzsche had thought

that it was a sickness of the will. But Wittgenstein is a republican, like Kant. Like Kant, he thinks that the time is diseased by language. Kant did not know capitalism, however, while Wittgenstein has been immersed in it.

The examination of language games, just like the critique of the faculties, identifies and reinforces the separation of language from itself. There is no unity to language; there are islands of language, each of them ruled by a different regime, untranslatable into the others. This dispersion is good in itself, and ought to be respected. It is deadly when one phrase regime prevails over the others. “Language (or thought) is something unique”—this proves to be a superstition (*not a mistake!*), itself produced by grammatical illusions” (*Investigations*, §110). This superstition, which Kant called transcendental illusion, did not stop the *Aufklärer*¹ from hoping that human history might have universal emancipation as its final goal, a goal to which philosophy contributes. For Wittgenstein, this malaise has no foreseeable remedy. It is linked to the hegemony of industrial technoscience, whose age is perhaps “the beginning of the end for humanity” (*Culture and Value*, 56), and whose “cultural” expressions are such things as set theory and behaviorist psychology. In this situation, philosophy can do nothing on its own, the sickness that gives rise to its problems can only be cured by a change in ways of living and thinking” (*Foundations of Mathematics*, II, 23). And if he had to choose, “I am by no means sure that I should prefer a continuation of my work by others to a change in the way people live which would make all these questions superfluous” (*Culture and Value*, 61).

The reflection of the *Tractatus*, which bears on the nature of logical and mathematical language, works by means of a philosophical metaphor that is, in the final analysis, fairly classical. Language is an image of the world; the world is represented in it (but the images of events that form propositions are themselves events, and language is part of the world). Thus, there is a “mirror”: the elements of language and the elements of reality are organized according to an analogous structure. Knowledge can be grounded on the basis of this presupposition. But it encounters two limits. The most immediate one is that one cannot express what makes propositions possible (the structural analogy between the world and language) by means of a logical or mathematical proposition. The other inexpressible element, at the greatest distance from the mirror, is ethical, aesthetic, or theological (perhaps political) value. *You ought* is not a proposition; it is not the image of a state of affairs. The meaning of life is not in the world: “ethics is transcendental,” “God does not reveal himself *in* the world” (*Tractatus*).

In the *Tractatus*, silence protects the languages of value against the claims of knowledge. In the subsequent investigations, silence disconnects the phrases of ordinary language and reveals their import. In ordinary language, a multiplicity of phrases obeys different regimes. Giving someone an order

does not have either the same stakes or the same rules for success as describing a landscape to him or her, telling him or her a story, providing the blueprint of a piece of machinery, or promising him or her something. Each set (or family) of phrases brings specific pressures to bear on the interlocutors, which push them to make phrase linkages in one way rather than another. In principle, “after” any given phrase, any phrase whatsoever may occur. If this is not generally the case, if some linkages are more expected than others, it is because rules for making linkages have been fixed and learned under the aegis of tradition. These rules may or may not be known to the participants, as in many games. Each of these families, whose limits, as the name indicates, are fluid, can be compared to a kind of game. Games do not have many common traits among them; a move made in bridge cannot be “translated” into a move made in tennis. The same goes for phrases, which are moves in language games: one does not “translate” a mathematical proof into a narration. Translation is itself a language game.

Mourning for the unity of language—a certain “joy” in the description of its strengths and its weaknesses, the refusal to have recourse to metaphysical entities like finality, the will to power, or even *thought*—ought to make Wittgenstein familiar to us. Writers, in the Mallarmean ambience of the crisis of letters, carried out a task that was of course not analogous or even convergent, yet which was not entirely alien to this: perhaps we should call it related. I know few works so useful for understanding Wittgenstein as Gertrude Stein’s *How to Write*.

The major difference no doubt lies in the persistence of an ultimately empiricist notion of language use in Wittgenstein’s writing. In these terms, people make use of language. They play at it. The fact that they do not know all the rules of the various language games has no impact on this anthropological assumption.

After Wittgenstein, the first task is that of overcoming this humanist obstacle to the analysis of phrase regimes, to make philosophy inhuman. Humanity is not the user of language, nor even its guardian; there is no more one subject than there is one language. Phrases situate names and pronouns (or their equivalent) in the universes they present. Philosophy is a discourse that has as its rule the search for its rule (and that of other discourses), a discourse in which phrases thus try themselves out without rules and link themselves guided only by amazement at the fact that everything has not been said, that a new phrase occurs, that it is not the case that nothing happens.

Secondly, the implications of this inhumanity for the question of the “social bond” remain to be analyzed. It should be easily understood that the principal difficulty is neither that of the state nor of “civil society,” as is often thought, but consists in the functioning of capital, which is a regime of linking phrases

far more supple and far more “inhuman” (oppressive, if you will) than any political or social regime. Wages, profits, funds for payment and credit, investment, growth and recession, the money market: it would indeed be interesting to analyze these objects as moves or rules proceeding from various language games. And what if capital were a multiform way of dominating time, of linking?

6

Intellectual Fashions (1983)

From the classical age to our own day, intellectual fashions have had their institutions: courts, salons, newspapers, journals, the electronic media. These are not means of diffusing ideas or works. Words or turns of phrase (rhetorics) that summarize, crystallize, but above all symbolize these ideas and these works are put into circulation there at high frequency, at an exceptional level of agitation. These are passwords. But where do they let you pass? They are loaded with symbolic value: the community that exchanges them recognizes itself by means of them, not because of their meaning, but thanks to their fiduciary value, their power to make distinctions.

From the princely or royal courts to the journals, the manifestos, the avant-garde publications, from the Renaissance to today, this fiduciary value of fashionable words has charged its inflection. The credit that fashionable words lend procures a mercantile power, not just an ideological or political one. The editors, the movie producers, the television directors, the newspaper editors, if not the “authors” of these ideas, make money out of the fashions in words. Mercantile exchange penetrates what is called culture, and imposes its rule of optimal difference. People speculate on the gaps between ways of thinking (of speaking) just as they do on those between ways of dressing, between modes of production, or between currencies. The difference in value that results from the gap consists in a gain of time. You have to move faster than the rest, be the first to furnish the words (the clothes, the currencies) that allow the community that adopts them to differentiate itself for a moment. One fulfills a desire for difference, and at the same time one destroys difference. The life of passwords is ephemeral.

Intellectual fashions presuppose the desire to be different from the rest in thinking. Common culture, if it ever existed, is not enough. It differentiates itself into subcultures, which focus themselves into currents, families of thought, sects, villages. The vitality of municipal governments in Italy is eminently suited to these rivalries. Keeping up. At the limit you can die for the latest word—dandyism. The Peloponnesian War was perhaps the effect of fashions: people

died for the glory of the name of the city and its eponyms. Fashion makes terms that signify ideas (sign, structure, pragmatics) count as proper names. But this rivalry only takes place on the basis of a common culture in which difference is valued. There is agreement that this discordance, if not this discord, is desirable. There is consensus on an interest in dissensus. Each village is made up of a unified people, the “intellectual class.”

The opposition of the modern to the classical is not chronological. The classical is not the ancient. Modernity is a temporal manner, like a kind of table manners or manner of thinking. It does not consist only in a particular attention paid to the future rather than to tradition. The perspective is classical, and there is a tradition of the new (understood as innovation). The modern is a feeling for the event as such, impromptu, imminent, urgent, disarming knowledge and even consciousness. The event is an absolute performative: it happens. Fashion is affirmed by the desire to be the event.

As soon as it happens, it ceases to be an event, it becomes a piece of information, which circulates and which loses its destabilizing force. The detective novel makes crime the paradigm of the event, time’s surprise.

Fashion has an affinity with aesthetics. The latter develops in the middle of the nineteenth century at the same time as poetics declines. The value of the work is determined by its evaluation by its addressees (the “public”), and not by the respect that the sender (author, artist, thinker) displays for the rules of the genre. Taste ceases to be a common sensibility fixed by rules. The community of taste is appealed to only as a horizon of universality. When one says “this is beautiful,” one means everyone ought to find this work beautiful, just, and so forth. Fashion in matters of thought, at least of theory, means that even the works that place truth at stake (and that in principle elicit arguments) fall under the regime of feeling and its undisputed sharing. But this sharing has to remain minoritarian and elitist.

This requirement of minority is essential to modernity. Modernity consists in working at the limits of what was thought to be generally accepted, in thought as in the arts, in the sciences, in matters of technology, and in politics. A modern painter is a painter for whom the nature of painting is at stake in the picture he or she is making. Philosophy, at least as critique, has probably always been modern. This work of testing limits also bears the name of the avant-garde. In the contemporary epoch, fashions often shield themselves with the title of the avant-garde. This is not always accurate. Sometimes it is. The right to bear this name can be judged on the basis of the disruption resulting from critical activity in thought. It may well be the case that one has to wait a long time to find out whether the title of avant-garde is deserved.

7

A Svelte Appendix to the Postmodern Question (1982)

A few remarks, devoid of theoretical pretensions, and in no particular order.¹

One hears talk everywhere that the great problem of society today is that of the state. This is a mistake, and a serious one. The problem that overshadows all others, including that of the contemporary state, is that of capital.

Capitalism is one of the names of modernity. It presupposes the investment of the desire for the infinite in an instance already designated by Descartes (and perhaps by Augustine, the first modern), that of the will. Literary and artistic romanticism believed in struggling against this realist, bourgeois, shopkeeper's interpretation of will as infinite enrichment. But capitalism has been able to subordinate to itself the infinite desire for knowledge that animates the sciences, and to submit its achievements to its own criterion of technicity: the rule of performance that requires the endless optimization of the cost/benefit (input/output) ratio. And romanticism was thrown back, still alive, into the culture of nostalgia (Baudelaire's "the world is going to end," and Benjamin's commentaries) while capitalism became, has become, a figure that is not "economic," not "sociological," but metaphysical. In capitalism, infinity is posed as that which is not yet determined, as that which the will must indefinitely dominate and appropriate. It bears the names of cosmos, of energy. It gives rise to research and development. It has to be conquered, to be turned into the means to an end, and this end is the glory of the will, a glory that is itself infinite. In this sense, capital is the real romanticism.

What strikes one when one returns to Europe from the United States is a bankruptcy of will, at least along the lines of this figure. The "socialist" countries also suffer from this anemia. Willing as infinite strength and as the infinity of "realization" cannot find its instance in a state, which uses up will in order to maintain itself as if it were a finality. The expansion of the will

requires only minimal institutions. Capitalism does not love order; the state loves it. The finality of capitalism is not a technical, social, or political creation built according to rule, its aesthetic is not that of the beautiful but of the sublime, its poetics is that of the genius: capitalist creation does not bend to rules, it invents them.

Everything Benjamin describes as “loss of aura,” aesthetic of “shock,” destruction of taste and experience is the effect of this will that cares little or nothing for rules. Traditions, statutes, objects, locations freighted with an individual and a collective past, accepted legitimacies, classical images of the world and of humanity, even when they are preserved, are preserved only as a means to an end: the glory of the will.

Marx understood all this very well, notably in the *Manifesto*. He tried to show where the figure of capitalism undid itself. He did not think of it as a figure, but as a thermodynamic system. And he showed that (1) it could not control its heat source, the labor force; (2) it did not control the gap between this source and the heat sink (the increase in value of production); and (3) it was going to exhaust its heat source.

Capitalism is, more properly, a figure. As a system, capitalism has as its heat source not the labor force but energy in general, physics (the system is not isolated). As figure, capitalism derives its force from the Idea of infinity. It can appear in human experience as the desire for money, the desire for power, or the desire for novelty. And all this can seem very ugly, very disquieting. But these desires are the anthropological translation of something that is ontologically the “instantiation” of infinity in the will.

This “instantiation” does not take place according to social class. Social classes are not pertinent ontological categories. There is no class that incarnates and monopolizes the infinity of the will. When I say “capitalism,” I do not mean the owners or the managers of capital. There are thousands of examples that show their resistance to willing, even technological willing. The same goes for the workers. It is a transcendental illusion to confuse what belongs to the order of ideas of reason (ontology) with what belongs to the order of concepts of the understanding (sociology). This illusion has produced both bureaucratic states, in particular, and all states.

When German (or American) philosophers today speak of the neoirrationalism of French thought, when Habermas gives lessons in progressive thought to Derrida and Foucault in the name of the project of modernity, they are seriously mistaken about what is at issue in modernity. The issue was not and is not (for modernity has not come to an end), the Enlightenment pure and simple, it was and is the insinuation of will into reason. Kant spoke of a drive of reason to go beyond experience, and he understood philosophy anthropologically as a *Drang*, as an impulse to fight, to create differends (*Streiten*).

And let's think a little more about the ambiguity of the aesthetics of a Diderot, divided between the neoclassicism of his theory of "relations" and the postmodernism of his writing in the *Salons*, in *Jacques*, and in the *Neveu de Rameau*.² The Schlegels were not fooled by it. They knew that the problem was precisely not that of consensus (of Habermasian *Diskurs*), but that of the unrepresentable, of the unexpected force of the Idea, of the event as the presentation of an unknown phrase, initially unacceptable and then accepted because tried out. The Enlightenment was hand in glove with preromanticism.

The decisive feature of what is called the postindustrial (Touraine, Bell), is that the infinity of the will invades language itself. The big deal of the past twenty years, to speak in the extremely dull phraseology of political economy and historical periodization, has been the transformation of language into a productive commodity. This takes two forms. First, phrases are considered as messages, to be encoded, decoded, transmitted, and arranged (packaged), reproduced, preserved, kept accessible (memories), combined and concluded (calculations), opposed (games, conflicts, cybernetics). Second, the unit of measurement—which is also a unit of price—is established: information. The effects of the penetration of capitalism into language are only beginning. Under the guise of an extension of markets and a new industrial strategy, the coming century is that of the investment of the desire for infinity, according to the criterion of optimum performance, in matters of language.

Language is the whole social bond (money is only an aspect of language, the accountable aspect, payment and credit, at any rate a play on differences of place or time). This investment of the desire for the infinite in language is thus going to destabilize the living creations of social life itself. It is a mistake to be afraid of an alienation occurring. The concept of alienation comes from Christian theology and also from the philosophy of nature. But god and nature have to give way as figures of infinity. We are not alienated by either the telephone or the television as means (media). We will not be alienated by the language machines. The only danger is if the will hands them over to states whose only concern is their own survival, that is, a need to create belief. But it is not alienation if the human gives way to a complex and aleatory assembly of (innumerable) program-transforming messages (Stourdzé). The messages are themselves only metastable states of information, subject to catastrophes.

In speaking of the idea of postmodernity, I situate myself in this context. And in this context I say that our role as thinkers is to deepen what language there is, to critique the shallow notion of information, to reveal an irremediable opacity within language itself. Language is not an "instrument of communication," it is a highly complex archipelago formed of domains

of phrases, phrases from such different regimes that one cannot translate a phrase from one regime (a descriptive, for example) into a phrase from another (an evaluative, a prescriptive). It is in this sense that Thom writes “an order contains no information.” All the investigations of the scientific, literary, and artistic avant-gardes over the past century have headed in this direction, the discovery of the incommensurability of the phrase regimes amongst them.

The criterion of optimal performance, in this light, seems to be a serious invalidation of the possibilities of language. Freud, Duchamp, Bohr, Gertrude Stein, but before them Rabelais and Sterne, are postmoderns in that they stress paradoxes, which always attest the incommensurability of which I am speaking. In this way they find themselves closest to the capacity and the practice of ordinary language.

As for what you call the French philosophy of recent years, if it has been postmodern in some way, this is because it has also stressed incommensurabilities, through its reflection on the deconstruction of writing (Derrida), on the disorder of discourse (Foucault), on the epistemological paradox (Serres), on alterity (Lévinas), on the effect of meaning by nomadic encounter (Deleuze).

When one reads Adorno *now*—above all texts like *Aesthetic Theory*, *Negative Dialectics*, and *Minima Moralia*—with these names in mind, one senses the element of an anticipation of the postmodern in his thought, even though it is still largely reticent, or refused.

What pushes him to this refusal is the political question. For if what I am roughly and quickly describing as postmodern here is accurate, what then of justice? Does what I say lead one to advocate the politics of neoliberalism? I do not think so in the least. It is itself an illusion. The reality is concentration into industrial, social, and financial empires served by the states and the political classes. But it is beginning to appear, on the one hand, that these monopolitical monsters do not always perform optimally and that they can act as hindrances to the will (what we used to call barbarism);³ on the other hand, it seems that labor in the nineteenth-century sense is what must be suppressed, and by other means than unemployment. Stendhal already said at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the ideal is no longer the physical force of ancient peoples; it is flexibility, speed, metamorphic capacity (one goes to the ball in the evening, and one wages war the next day at dawn). Svelteness,⁴ wakefulness, a Zen and an Italian term. It is most of all a quality of language, because it takes very little energy to create the new (Einstein in Zurich). The language machines are not expensive. This fact already makes the economists desperate: they tell us that the machines will not soak up the enormous overcapitalization with which we are burdened at the end

of a period of expansion. This is probably the case. Thus the infinity of the will must come to terms with svelteness: much less “working,” much more learning, knowing, inventing, circulating. Justice in politics lies in pushing in this direction. (It will indeed be necessary one day to reach an international accord on the concerted reduction of labor time without a loss of purchasing power.)

Part II

Students

8

Dead Letter

(1962)

Even if the number of classrooms, assistants, conference leaders, and professors were to be increased, even if the profession were better paid, I hope we would continue to hear the question asked of us, students and teachers, by life at the Sorbonne, by work in the university: What is culture? How is it present here?

The great secret need by which students and teachers are preoccupied is not a desire for an increase in the number of classrooms, for a reduction in the student-teacher ratio, for better financial incentives for teaching, or for official recognition of the dignity of learning. We could still work in cramped conditions, in anonymity, in poverty, unrecognized. The fellahs who learn to read and write in the underground forces have nothing, not even “qualified” teachers; they have a desire to understand their life and the world, and the desire to live up to this desire.

Culture is lending an ear to what strives to be said, culture is giving a voice to those who do not have a voice and who seek one. This voice is not only discursive; it can be, it has been, dancing and painting, building and sculpture.

Historically, culture is a particular way of being in fundamental situations: birth, death, love, work, giving birth, being embodied, growing old, speaking. People have to be born, to die, and so forth, and a people arises in response to these tasks, to these calls, as it understands them. This understanding, this listening, and the resonance that is granted it, is at the same time what a people is, its understanding of itself, its being-together. Culture is not a system of meanings attributed to fundamental situations on the basis of conventions, a project, or a contract; it is the being-there that is people.

By the same token, it is not an activity separated from other activities, but only their “common sense.”¹ There is and there ought to be as much culture in what the West has split off and ignored under the titles of “sexuality” and “labor” as there is in a sonata or a totem pole. The nature of a response to

the call of rest, of hunger, the way in which certain appeals are not heard at all—all that is culture. Even when the working out of the meaning that is common to all activities develops into a differentiated reflection, it is (as one sees in certain archaic cultures) the elderly who are in charge of it, not because they are no longer good for anything else, not because they are placed outside the community, but because they are in the community as the result of the community, having already had to respond to almost all of the situations of culture and now occupied with preparing themselves for the last of them.

Inhabiting all the relations of a people to the world and to itself, all of its understanding and all of its work, culture is simply existence accepted as meaningful. In culture there is no work (in the sense of an activity whose purpose, as production or consumption, lies outside of itself), nor is there religiosity either (as the delegation to an Other of the task of giving order to life and death), and there is not even art undertaken as an exercise of expression. Similarly, there are no cultivated and uncultivated activities. There is no need to bear witness to the fact that there is a culture and to its nature by specific rites or solemnities set apart. All of life is this witness. This weight of meaning in activity is present in *L'île nue*, in *Come Back, Africa*, in the tattered rags of living culture dispersed around the Mediterranean basin and elsewhere, in black music, in the topography of old Amsterdam.

We are essentially cut off from it. In our society sign and signification, activity and culture, living and understanding, are dissociated. Responses to fundamental situations lie on one side of this divide; the meaning of these situations and these answers is sought on the other side. But the answers cannot be answers, cannot correspond to a call, because this call is sought elsewhere, because meaning becomes the object of a question and this question becomes the object of a special activity (“culture”).

On the one hand, activities devoid of meaning are organized according to the model of the machine, a model whose purpose lies outside itself, which does not question that purpose. A mechanistic economy, whose principle is the search for an optimal relation between expenditure and production, is imposed as the rule of all activities: procreating, which has now become the technology of parturition, aims to produce at will, with the least possible wasted expenditure, a child that is viable in all desirable respects. Working becomes the carrying out of operations, subjected to imperatives of time and even of norms foreign to its content, ultimately dictated by the axiom (which manages the “managers” in the first place) that “economic” society is a machine and ought to obey the rule of the best possible cost/benefit ratio, for all types of results and investments. Love provides the occasion for the establishment of a technology by means of which affectivity and sexuality, once isolated, can be engaged in according to the same principle: seduction

and eroticism, left to themselves, seek the best return on one's feeling for and one's enjoyment of the other. In the practice of sport, being embodied is split off as a particular situation and worked on by specific exercises according to the same general economy. Recreation and rest, eating and dwelling are similarly mechanized.

Each of these activities become machines has an apparatus assigned to it that is made up of specialists qualified to guarantee its optimal functioning. This apparatus has in its turn to obey the rule of optimal balance. Thus a new apparatus is set up to ensure the functioning of the preceding one. The machines are superimposed on one another in a hierarchy. Their reason is always elsewhere. Death itself has become only the death of others. The people as a common attention to situations, as the understanding of itself, is destroyed. Its particular way of being-there is ground up in the uniformly mechanistic organization. Sociality and personality succumb at the same time.

On the other hand, culture is no longer a practice of listening and responding to the call of fundamental situations in everyday life. Displaced from everyday life, set on one side in special activities, what can culture hear, with what can it correspond? At the Sorbonne one does not procreate, one does not love, one is not a body, one neither eats nor dies, one does not work (in the sense of the workshop). The mind alone seems to be able to earn the right of entry; but the mind is simply the meaning of what is left behind at the door, left outside.

When the mind and life are divorced, the intellectual is the one who cultivates the mind, who cultivates the meaning of life without life itself. But, just as answering without understanding is blind and ends up reducing itself to a technologism that seeks its reason in itself alone, so too devoting oneself to understanding in general as a vocation without being able to answer in specific situations is vain. The mind is nothing except meaning received and revealed in the situations and the answers of which life is made up. Intellectuals cannot carry out the task imposed on them: to witness for the mind. The mind that they look after has left life, their lives, behind.

Let us nonetheless enter into the place where culture is cultivated. Once activities have been stripped of their common sense, the reason that culture nonetheless seeks to provide for them can only unify them externally, in a supplementary discourse. This discourse is no longer the thing itself—male and female according to the promptings of the flesh, the worker and his or her work in the movement of their reciprocal creation, and so forth—that speaks in the gestures, in the silences, and in the words of love, of labor, and so on. Rather, it is an established discourse *about* love, labor, and so forth. No one who is in love joins the banquet of the philosophers; Alcibiades would be forced to leave. Speaking does not let what is going on speak itself; rather

it confers meaning (*sens*) on non-sense. Degenerate versions of Marxism and existentialism lend their names to the leading theme: Man is the creature who makes and who makes himself.

Culture grapples with the question of what there is to say. A cultural activity would gather and preserve the sense that activities have abandoned. But if there is non-sense outside the university, there cannot be sense within. Modern life does not expect to receive its reason from the professors, however willing they may be to provide it. No appeal to this culture comes from a labor force exhausted in factories and offices, from the loneliness of women with all modern conveniences around two p.m. behind the windows of their dormitory suburbs, from the disenchantment of young people in black leather leaning up against Formica counters, from the useless elderly, from a childhood made up of rejection. No reason can make this humanity accept itself, still less make it like itself, for what it is.

The Faculty does not have the vocation of responding to the real problem of culture, to the meaning of life: life does not invoke the Faculty as its potential guide toward its truth.² That which is cultivated between our walls, the culture that has a Faculty dedicated to it, is made up of the arts and the human sciences, two versions of humanity, the one given in the “humanities,” the other in “anthropology,” something that is quite different from the understanding and expression of the contemporary world.

The humanities mould a model of mankind that arose in the Renaissance once Christianity was no longer capable of understanding its world and responding to it, when the cultural void that developed more or less accepted the *raisons d'être* that the Greeks had supplied in earlier times for the question already evident in the first tragedians and the first philosophers: according to what reason is there something to live and die for? The person of the humanities is first of all the sage who seeks to set himself or herself in agreement with a wise world, in metaphysics, in ethics, in politics, in aesthetics, in gymnastics, this reason that dialogues with the reason in being. It is this wisdom that lends speech in the university its well-balanced syntax. This wisdom also serves as a guide for the judgments that the university pronounces against the modern malaise, and as a shield against the intrusion of disharmony and violence into the interior of the university. It is in the name of this wisdom that eclecticism of truths and pluralism in opinions are held to be fundamental values. It is this very same wisdom that authorizes the traditional relation of professorial authority in which a knowledge is professed from the seat of authority, a knowledge whose disciplined acquisition has coincided with the degrees by which its holder has ascended to that chair.

But because the *humanitas* cultivated here is not the spirit of these times, acquiring such a knowledge requires that it be taught to ignore actual

situations; welcoming liberalism supposes ignorance of the universal constraint exercised over real activities; to invoke the order of the mind is to revoke the spirit of a disordered reality; to discourse according to the melodic rule is to make a vain challenge to ears prepared for the silence of words and the fury of sounds. The sages produced by the course of unlearning that constitutes such studies can only be called “academicians,” they can only hear their peers, can only be heard by them. If they go out into the streets, it is to proclaim the values they profess, the values that were professed to them. But how might the freedom of which the university declares itself to be the guardian find an echo in the factories and the offices, in the barracks, the prisons, the hospitals, on the building sites, where the tumultuous silence of constraint reigns?

If so many students fail to get their degrees, it is useless to blame this on their lack of financial means, or on a decline in their abilities. It does make sense to attribute their quitting to the impossible condition created for them by the discordance between the questions that humanity asks itself through them and the answers that the humanities supply to those questions.

But given the failings of the Faculty of Letters, we now have a Faculty of Human Sciences. An effort seems to be made to hear modern humanity. Has humanism not caught up with its times by becoming anthropology? Economics, sociology, and psychology have been authorized. The new student generation, if it has difficulty in cultivating classical *humanitas*, seems to nourish a realistic affection for the science of humanity.

From being retrospective, culture becomes “forward-looking.” University parlance accommodates the words, as strange as barbarian gems, with which the new knowledge surrounds previously unexpressed phenomena: psychodrama, introjection, test groups, acculturation, transfer. Industrial labor, religiosity in boardinghouses, adolescent crisis, neuroses and psychoses, paleo- and neotechnologies, poles of development and kinship structures, film studies—all enter the portals of the university. The mandarins give way to research and intervention; the Sorbonne seems to take a footing in the city once more. Seminars and working groups give rise to a new pedagogy in which exchange between generations, the dialogue between researchers, and collective expression situate the knowledge that exposes itself there.

Just as the person whom the study of letters aimed to develop was manifest, so the person prepared by anthropology is unexpressed. The human sciences are waiting for their formulation. But this can only be a countermetaphysics: historical science frees itself of the philosophy of history, social science relegates Marxism and all the -isms to the storeroom, psychology has freed itself of the

traditional presuppositions of humanism, ethnology puts Greco-Christian wisdom in its place, even psychoanalysis suspects Freudian generalizations of metaphysics.

Yet do the activities that are worn down and kept on a leash by specialized apparatuses in society, the activities that are stripped of the power to resonate, find their speech in the new “culture”? They are talked about, but this discourse does not make these activities more significant for those who carry them out, these activities “do not say any more to them,” even if their agents were to speak in person³ (because the interview is also one of these new methods). Anthropology cannot be the culture of a life whose elements are all subjected to the rule of technological discourse alone.

The intervention of anthropology into life does not give the latter the unity of a meaning. Of course it is not blinded by the obsolete model of humanity that cuts the study of letters off from reality. However, it is hostile or powerless to hear the question that is asked in the world, “What do we live for?” which is the question of culture. Scattered across the multiple sectors of life, sectors that it accepts as so many special fields for study and intervention, anthropology seeks an alibi for its deafness and myopia in its dignity as a science. But science in modern practice does not propose that its object should call upon it to respond: it sets out its object as a mere thing and works on it according to a mechanical strategy, the same one that operates on activities in actual society. Thus the science of humanity, however pure the intentions of its protagonists, is destined to endow the social apparatuses with a supplement of power in offering them the means of an increased mechanization of the activities they seek to regulate. There is no need for the industrial sociologist or the psychotechnician to be *corrupted* in order for psychosocial “culture” to be incorporated into the strategy that corporate leadership uses on the workers, any more than there was for the scientific and technical inventions of the nineteenth century, so profitable to the organization of the technological oppression of labor, to be directly stimulated by that oppression. It is enough for the results of research, whether technical or anthropological, to be inspired by the same principle that rules society: the aim of all activity is to reach optimal equilibrium between cost and benefit. Anthropology merely brings new refinements to the application of this rule, which is that of our unculture.

Leaving the shelter of letters to seek refuge in the science of humanity no doubt provides some renewal for the Faculty, but at the price of eluding the cultural task once more. Besides its own specialists (the professors), the Sorbonne will train the thinkers of a labor camp that is suited to the model by which modern institutions tend to organize life and thought. The unthought question in the grind of the technical world, the question that the absurdity

of the extermination camps first brought into the open—What meaning is there in existing?—is a question that resounds for everyone, Monday morning and Saturday night, that reveals the emptiness of “civilization” in all of its industrial flashiness. We should not expect academics and experts on mankind to answer it or even to hear it as produced by anything other than a metaphysical anxiety, although it is in reality the only serious, vital, everyday question.

The repression that culture undergoes does not necessarily take the form of a gun held to the university’s head by a totalitarian state. Police measures are not required for the oppression of the only “faculty” that is essential to culture, the faculty of listening to and saying what asks to be heard and said; all it takes is for ears to be deaf and words to be lacking. The failure of university discourse to embrace the desire for meaning, for values to be embodied in activities, and for a reconstitution of community is not a recent phenomenon—did the Sorbonne, for example, hear or express the paroxysm of this desire a century ago during the Paris Commune?

But what is happening today is that this desire—which is everywhere, in the everyday resistance of the workers to increased rhythms of work and of soldiers to orders, in the “irrational” stubbornness of the Aveyron miners, in last year’s Belgian strikes, in the generalized sabotage of the mechanistic organization by which apparatuses throughout the world try to suppress the resonance of actions and activities—this desire, which is the only desire for a culture that there is, cannot find the words to express itself. Not only is literature a separate occupation more incapable than ever of lending its own words to this desire; politics, for its part, is so cautious that no significant political organization whose speech and gestures could make this desire reverberate exists anywhere in the modern world.

The activity of speaking is itself subject to the mechanistic model. Speech is no longer the activity that lets what demands to be said be spoken (poetry). It is an operation performed on what are now called “listeners” in order to make them do and say whatever conforms to the plans of the apparatus that regulates their activity (strategy). Speaking is only the instrument of operations, be these working (instructions), consuming (advertising), or voting (propaganda). Thus the identity of meaning and speech is overcome. The meaning of language also lies elsewhere, in constraint, nowhere.

Cultural desire is the desire to put an end to the exile of meaning as external to activities. It is at the same time the desire to put an end to the exile of activities as estranged from their sense. Its instrument cannot be the university, which dwells in this very exile, and is the product of it. Nor can speech alone be its instrument. Now we must look for the acts in which this desire is

already silently present; we must hear in these acts the call of a sense, a call that has no truck with the operational world but that is nevertheless utterly contemporary; we must make the call ring out, at the cost of transgressing (destroying) the apparatuses that stifle it; we must find the ways to make it ring out, the opportunities and the means. That is what it means to take culture literally.

9

Preamble to a Charter (1968)

The starting point of our struggle at Nanterre was a refusal of the Fouchet reforms (November 1967)¹ and the practical affirmation of the right to political expression in the faculty (March 22, 1968, onward). Henceforth, social reality and the university's function in relation to it will be subjected to permanent criticism and contestation. Our task will have to be that of displacing [*détourner*]² the entire institution of the university as fully as possible from the functions to which it is restricted by both the ruling class and its own deeply internalized repressions, in order to turn it into a place for working out the means of the critical understanding and expression of reality. The resumption of classes at Nanterre in 1968 will not be a return to normal; normality was cultural oppression. Our task is not simply to "make the faculty work" (for whom, to what ends?) but to criticize, to deconstruct the institution, to determine the orientation we want to give to our work, to develop a program for this work, and to realize it.

I. May 1968

1. The crisis that began in May 1968 is not a "crisis"; it ushers us into a new period of history. Critique and struggle target and disrupt not only the political regime but also the social system, and not only capitalist private property but also the organization of life as a whole, all of the "values" that modern societies, be they from the West or the East, utilize or fabricate, impose or insinuate, to defuse desire. To fail to see this is to fail to understand anything about our movement: the spirit that shook the nation to the point of creating a power vacuum was not about claiming rights within society. This is not a will for political renewal but the desire for something different, the desire for another society, for different relations between people. The force of this desire shook the edifice of exploitation, oppression, and alienation; it struck fear into the hearts of all the individuals, organizations, and parties with an

immediate or a distant interest in power; and it was this force that they used every possible means to repress. They couldn't manage it.

2. The political oppression of the citizen and the socioeconomic exploitation of labor were denounced in word and deed. But the movement attacked cultural alienation with the same vigor. Thus it extended revolutionary critique across the entire domain over which the modern ruling classes had established their grip. In the university, critique addressed the exteriority of knowledge to life, its connivance with power, along with the persistence of hierarchical relations. In society, critique attacked the monopolization of knowledge by a single social class, the mercantilization and the deproblematicalization of the information distributed to other classes, the provision of cultural objects that favor identifications that are not under the subject's control and hence are controllable by the powers that be, and the exclusion of the laboring classes from the means of understanding and expression. What the movement wants to destroy is the separation of culture from social experience (the division between intellectual and manual labor) along with the separation between decision making and practice (the division between managers and operatives), and, finally, the denigration and recuperation of creative forces.

3. Our critique is not only verbal; it is critical-practical. It involves the offensive blockage of the institution of the university and its diversion [*détournement*] to revolutionary ends, it involves physical combat against the so-called order, transgressions. Through its form of struggle, the movement makes manifest the weakness of the system as a whole. It revives the workers' struggle that had been absorbed and deadened by the verbal and legal forms imposed by the system. The movement affirms the freedom to speak equally, mockery of the hierarchy, the courage to submit all questions to open debate, the destruction of enforced isolation, encounter, and initiative, against the continuing violence of oppression in businesses, in leisure, in families, in the establishments of so-called education. Our violence consists in reestablishing expressive speech and gesture; our opponents' violence consists in repressing them. To try to prosecute our violence in the courts is quite simply laughable.

4. The radical and practical character of this critique finds an echo among the workers, particularly the young. Protest is beginning to leave the ghetto of the university; the critique of cultural alienation is beginning to join up with the critique of socioeconomic exploitation and political oppression once again. An embryonic alliance is forming between the workers' and the students' struggles. It is weak with respect to the adversary that has to be fought; it is formidable if one compares it to the isolation and the hopelessness that reigned in the class struggle before May 1968.

5. The future of the current revolution depends entirely on the strengthening of the alliance between students and workers. The students bring their denunciation of culture and values to the struggle. Isolated, their critique will be recuperated by the system: the ruling class can always enjoy the cultural revolution as spectacle. The workers bring their experience and their denunciation of exploitation to the struggle; isolated, and in the absence of a revolutionary party, their struggle ceases to challenge the system and merely makes claims within it. In modern society, where technical development increases the importance of intellectual labor, the student is no longer a young bourgeois bohemian but is an element of the social forces of production in training. That is why the student's desertion from the ruling-class camp can assume a decisive importance.

6. In order to achieve this alliance, the movement ought not to let itself be intimidated by slander, wherever it comes from; above all it ought not to let itself be disarmed from within by self-censorship. That we are called provocateurs and adventurers wouldn't deserve a moment's attention were it not that the insult hides a very dangerous attempt to cut the student movement off from the workers' movement and to keep the workers within the established social and political order. We must reply by consolidating our alliance with the workers on the basis of a critique of this "order" as a whole. But alliance is not subordination, neither that of the workers to the students, nor even that of the students to the workers. The student movement has brought a dimension to the revolution that the workers' movement, such as it is, had lost; the student movement is something more than a trigger in the class struggle—it is a constitutive element of it, both in theory and in practice. For the problem actually posed by modern societies is not only how to get rid of the boss as the owner of capital, but also how to overcome the separation between managers and operatives. By placing this problem in the foreground, the student movement has demonstrated that this aspect of the revolutionary program, which constitutes socialism's most radical content, is the only effective reply to the contradictions of modern societies.

II. The Faculty

1. The faculty is not an independent institution dedicated to the elaboration and transmission of a knowledge in itself. A society such as ours, which can only continue to exist by ceaselessly aiming at the complete integration of all of its functions, is not able to maintain a zone of free knowledge and free expression within itself. The faculty stands at the center of two major operations mounted against the means of understanding and expression: the operations of defusing and recuperation. The defusing of the means of understanding and expression is carried out by the faculty

of dead letters; their recuperation is the task of the faculty of human relations.³ The former diverts intelligence and inventiveness away from praxis toward the fetishization of finished works, of the past, of that which is established; the latter employs the same intelligence and inventiveness in the conditioning of the work force and the raising of its output. The work of defusing produces the scholar; the work of recuperation produces the expert. The imagination of the ruling class cannot come up with anything more innovative than to make the faculty produce experts rather than scholars. That was the Fouchet plan.

2. Not only are the means of understanding and expression the preserve of a few people: *by virtue of this very limitation* they cease to be means of intelligence and creation. They become a closed-off culture, shut up in either delight or efficiency, led astray. The fact is that expression and intelligence are most often destined to trace their path outside the university. It would be useless to democratize entry into the university if the alienation of the mind that reigns inside it were to remain intact. The faculty must become a place where tools and works are forged.

3. The university will not, of course, be revolutionary; whatever we may be able to do here can and will be recuperated by the powers that be, until society as a whole is reconstructed differently. Yet the task to be carried out in the faculty is not merely one of vulgar reformism. We have to impose institutions and modes of teaching and research that allow the critical comprehension of reality in all its forms and the liberation of the power of expression. We must not leave the carrying out of these reforms to the powers that be and to their allies, the moderate teachers and students. They would simply not carry out any reforms, and their failure would put us straight back in the old university system. The distinction would not always get made between the critique of a university judged to be inadequate because it is *not adapted* to the requirements of modern capitalism and the critique of a university judged inadequate precisely because it would *remain adapted* to these requirements, and contestation would continue to be confused with reformism. The movement would be led to shut itself up in the sphere of the university instead of fighting alongside the workers. It would slip backward. Basically, it would be recuperated.

4. In grappling not only with political oppression and socioeconomic exploitation but also with cultural alienation, the movement has revealed that repression is not only a matter of police brutality or electoral fiddling, nor even exclusively a matter of pressure on wage earners and on the rhythms of work. Rather, it slides into the content and the forms of culture, of the culture that the ruling class diffuses through television, the press, social clubs, package holidays, the cinema, and magazines just as much as through university culture. In particular, it appears that at the heart of the cultural

relation (in society, distributor/cultural product/consumer; in the university, teacher/knowledge/student), repressive systems that are much more archaic than those of class society and that feed the repressive systems of class society are in operation. The drama of desire and its repression, of fear and the reactionary search for security, form the silent province in which the ruling classes work more and more openly in order to maintain their domination, and this is the level that our critique must reach if it is to be true. The truth is what transforms; it alone is revolutionary; with it alone there is no compromise. We must try to be the salt of truth in the wound of alienation.

5. We must keep the pedagogical relation as a whole open, offered to critical consciousness. The teacher/pupil relation ought to be permanently protected against both a falling back into the old hierarchic magisterial relation and the demagogery that proposes a symmetry between the teacher and the pupil, as well as against the training of the pupil as a mere expert/counselor. Knowledge must also be ceaselessly kept from reverting back into a known thing. The splitting apart of knowledge (for example, into departments and into specialities in the faculty) must also be disrupted, and the purposes of knowledge must be the object of a permanent indictment: in this society, knowledge is constantly compromised with power.

6. Those who fear the politicizing of teaching and hope that serious work will be possible in this faculty should be completely reassured. We too fear the politicizing of the university by Fouchet or Otolí; we too want true work, that is, the work of truth. We have no catechism to be recited, no dogma to insinuate, no conviction to suggest. We want the questions that are asked of humanity to be asked and to continue to be asked in all the seminars, workshops, and commissions of the faculty.

7. The projects that are presented here arise from this spirit. They have no other aim than to consolidate the conquests of May 1968 at the most advanced point attained by the movement. In particular, we affirm that we will concede nothing on the following points:

- freedom of expression and political assembly in the faculty;
- participation by both students and teachers in all bodies; and
- common student-teacher electoral lists.

10

Nanterre, Here, Now (1970)

The style of intervention of these groups, like the general context in which they operate—at Assas, from an extreme-right ideology, elsewhere, under the pretext of a pseudo revolutionary phraseology—makes them auxiliaries of big capital. It is thus a union question of first importance that there be no ambiguity on this point: all the teachers' and students' unions ought to condemn such practices publicly and unite their efforts to make them impossible. We condemn all commando acts using violence against the teachers, the students, and the ensemble of the personnel. Our union struggle is supported by the large majority in the universities; it can only progress in the struggle of ideas and persuasion.... The armed gangs that attack the militants ought to be dissolved.

Georges Innocent, secretary general of the National Union of University Teachers (SNE Sup.), communiqué of February 14, 1970

The following text takes up the ideas that I was supposed to put forward in the meeting against the repression, organized by the union minorities of the SNI, the SNES, and the SNE Sup,¹ as well as by the researchers' union. It was not possible for me to speak, the security marshals having taken it upon themselves to throw out a small group of "troublemakers" (among whose number were three teachers suspended by the ministry) who chanted, "We want our money back, we want our money back"—which was relevant since the meetings are theatrical spectacles and this one was not particularly good. I had to leave in turn, on my own initiative. The repression had entered the meeting. This banal incident is full of meaning, and this meaning is the same that emanates from the affairs of Nanterre.

Spring 1969: the next-to-last appearance of the cops on the Nanterre campus happens “calmly.” For several days the faculty of letters [building] has been surrounded by a cordon of riot police spaced five meters apart as if on parade, while the guardians of the peace formed a line at each entrance. Cops and secret police disguised as “strong-armed attendants” were removed right before the university elections following indignant protests and a hunger strike.

February-March 1970: the first cops that appear on the “normalized” [banalisé] campus serve as a target. Friday and Monday, as soon as the cops penetrate the interior of the campus, they are greeted by projectiles thrown by the students. Tuesday, March 5, at 3:30 p.m., 1,500 agitators leave the faculty [building], and several go looking for the cops outside the campus. For three hours the cops will try to occupy the terrain but will be driven back beyond the buildings. Not only did the students cause the “normalization” of the campus to fail, they also took back the campus space.²

There is no question that the repression has intensified. But such a superficial effect is not the right place from which to begin an analysis of what is happening at Nanterre. At the least, it is necessary to *reverse* the apparent facts: repression is itself a riposte, and it is the movement that has seized and for the moment holds the initiative, at least in the milieu of the university. Everything that participates in the system (in the increased reproduction of capital, Eastern as well as Western) works together to suppress the slow, subterranean, worldwide push that is visibly shaking the sites where teaching takes place, but that is also rocking the sites of production (even though it is a thousand times crushed, anesthetized, paralyzed, led astray, threatened). This critique is not at all mysterious in origin: it proceeds from the fact that activities and institutions previously sheltered from the requirement for the increased reproduction of capital are now under orders to operate as simple moments in the circuit of this reproduction. This is especially the case for the so-called educational and teaching function.

7:00 p.m.: the (senseless) order to withdraw to the university cafeteria circulates among the students. It will be little obeyed. The students leave the fac[ulty building] at once. The cops who had left the campus receive permission to charge back onto a campus deserted by the majority of the students: the beatings begin.

They are most violent at the exit to the cafeteria, once the students have been forced to evacuate the building. After they had switched off the lights, the cops saturated the building with tear gas (and other) grenades.

It is absolutely necessary to identify very precisely the point of insertion of the so-called student movement into the subterranean system that constitutes the entire “reason” of our societies. This point of insertion occurs with the inevitable subordination of both the “contents” of culture and the pedagogical relation to the sole operative categories of capital: production and consumption. Not only are there no “armed gangs,” it is not enough to say that there is a crisis in our culture. Why has this crisis occurred, if not because traditional cultural values, relics of all kinds (to cite a few at random: the predominance of a university discourse and freedoms characteristic of the Middle Ages, the Napoleonic hierarchy, the secularism and neutrality of the Third Republic) combined in the university practice, are being annihilated by capitalism? The system ends up by devouring everything that is outside it; the “despair of young people” is the despair of the M-C-C-M cycle.³ The so-called student movement draws its life from the void created by the domination of capital. Such is its inevitability.

This void spreads its chill within the walls of the faculties. Most of the teachers *and the students* prefer not to see it. Almost all that is said, almost all that *we* think, on the subject of this so-called teaching crisis (but that nevertheless obliges *Le Monde* to open a strange wavering column on “leftist” agitation alongside the university page), is motivated as a defense against anxiety. When the folks of the Autonomous Union pose the problem of the faculty of Nanterre in terms of “the freedom and security of individuals” against “armed gangs” (motion read by J. Beaujeu to the Transitional Council of February 20, 1970, the same council that voted to open the campus to the police), it is of course a maneuver at one level (“In the event that the Transitional Management Council did not support them,” it says at the end of the motion, “they [the members of the union] would immediately begin an administrative strike”). In truth, however, this is a *displacement* that allows the anxiety provoked by teaching under present conditions to be disguised as the fear of being attacked with iron bars. The old political phraseology fulfills the same role: when the individuals or the groups that take initiatives are judged to be irresponsible adventurers, they are compared to organizations that, in their seriousness, their continuity, their order, and their numbers claim to be able to cover up this vacuum of meaning. The solemn banalities of the Trotskyists constitute attempts at a counterinvestment that might ward off the fear of *what is to be done?*⁴

“A request was brought before the room-assignment commission: a group of students asks for the allocation of a room on the ground floor, type C13, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. every evening and on Saturday from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., for cultural activities. These involved organizing supervised studies for the young North

Africans of the shantytown. The Commission on Room Assignments remarks that the faculty would in no way be the place for activities that concern primary education.”

Transitional Management Council of the Nanterre Faculty,
session of February 20, 1970, official minutes

Politics, too, is an institution. Fringe group politics is a miniaturized institution. There is no difference between the security stewards [*service d'ordre*] of the March 16 meeting and those of the “Communist” party; the question of whether keeping “order” is a service does not always get asked. The question is not even that of knowing *what* order is at stake, that is, the question of the signified of the institution. The question is that of the *form* taken by the presence of order, of the relation there is between the people to whom one renders this “service” (of keeping order) and this order. This relation is mediated, bureaucratized, abstract, preserved in the very form in which we inherit it from our adversaries. The same goes for political discourse: there, too, a phraseology is handed down to us and we reproduce it faithfully. We let our relation to our political activity and to our comrades be mediated by an institutionalized *form* of speech. This institution most obviously consists of placing this speech once and for all in the mouth of a great dead man: Marx or Lenin or Trotsky or Mao (he may not be dead, but he is oriental—the Bajazet of politics). Thus the symbolic Father continues, under various imaginary costumes, to govern our words and our acts; thus the question of power among our own ranks is always stifled, always displaced into the question of the power facing us. A first victory would be to manage to speak of these affairs without “talking politics.”

M.Touzard: How long might it take to transform the faculty domain into the public domain?

M.Beaujeu: An interministerial agreement would be necessary.

*M. Francés:*⁵

Transitional Management Council of the Nanterre Faculty, session of February 20, 1970, official minutes

On Friday, February 27, the police patrol the paths of the university area in force. Clashes. On Monday and Tuesday, March 2 and 3, confrontations and scuffles between Parisian police and both mobile guards (who try to hold these paths) and the students (who occupy the buildings of Law and Letters). At 7:00 p.m., the forces of “order” have abandoned the terrain and the students attack a group of police in the parking lot close to the railroad. In the classrooms, the ground is strewn with chairs without legs, broken glass, and water that has been spread to counteract tear gas; barricades are set up all

the way to the ceiling behind the entrances, seminar tables are pushed up against the windows as shields; on the terraces the same system of protection, accumulation of diverse materials. On the campus, cars with slashed tires, and so on. All very familiar.

"What no one has said is that from March 4 on, the withdrawal (of the police forces) was requested by the commanders of the police themselves. ... What we know too is that our colleagues had decided either not to get out of their police vans, or to exceed all their orders, if the playacting of March 2 and 3 began again.... In the future, we have decided to insist that, for requisitions of this kind, staff representatives be in a position to discuss the means of deployment and above all the conditions of employment of personnel. If this is not the case, we reserve the right to issue any and all union orders appropriate to the situation."

G.Monate, secretary general of the Autonomous Federation of Police Unions

A student on the roof of the faculty. A cop close to the buildings. Exchanges of projectiles. Verbal exchange: "Go to hell, your father is minister!" "Then why do you obey him, asshole?"

At the initial level, a classical analysis can be provided: 1969 was a year of restoration and even of revenge. And at this level, everything holds together perfectly: de Gaulle and his Gaullists are bent on winning over some of the wage earners, teachers, and students to their regime by means of participationist policy. They refuse to bow before the offensive of the owners of capital who, since June 1968, have expatriated their piles of money so that its return may be made conditional on the return of a repressive government. The Gaullists accept the challenge of the referendum and are beaten by the campaign of the capitalists. For the National Education Ministry, the defeat of this tendency meant the downfall of Faure.⁶

The professors are nonexistent and scared to death (those in the faculty, of course, not those involved in the action). They no longer exist in the eyes of the students. Poorly displaced anxieties: in an ethnology classroom, while fifty or so students supply those on the roofs with tables, chairs, and other utensils, a flabbergasted and totally ignored prof implores: "Please, leave a few of them, save something..."

All the pontiffs, successful or unsuccessful mandarins, prepare with bitterness, not to mention sheer stupidity, to cross swords with the people who had made them tremble in May. The minister makes Faurist declarations while

issuing guarantees and signing warrants like an anti-Faurist. The truth is that he is in deep trouble: the return to ancient university practices is no longer appropriate to the “expansion” required to facilitate the circulation of capital. Where to gain support? There is hardly anything promising apart from the participationist line of the union organizations controlled by the “Communist” party and the sincere reformism of a few professors. But here again, things are not so easy: the “communists” or their fellow travelers have taken over leadership positions in the teachers’ unions and even in the establishment administrations. This may well be all to the good, but after all, it is still the *Communist party!* The CDR⁷ complains about infiltration, but even if he wanted to, Guichard cannot reply to them as Faure did: he has no de Gaulle. Overall the reformist line is a razor’s edge, occupied by two or three individuals, like

Students and cops fight. Hundreds of persons massed on the other side of the railroad watch the spectacle all afternoon. They will not come to rejoin us. It will not occur to the students to point their sound system toward them.

Ricoeur. Insisting on the university’s right to elbow room easily wins the reestablishment of its prerogatives. This is not in the interest of the system (an interest that is Faurist), it is the indulgence of the system’s particular passion for the university. In the Transitional Council of Nanterre, this passion rules: the leftists boycotted last year’s elections (refusing the reintegration of the movement within the system); there are elected “communists” in the UER [departmental] councils, but few of them represent their UER⁸ in the Faculty Council; the elected students practice absenteeism. If you were a person of the right, you would have said to yourself, “A good opportunity to have done with the troublemakers, with the armed gangs, with the longhairs.”

The cops driven back sideways to building E throw grenades at the students at the junction of the two faculty buildings. The grenades are picked up and thrown back; when they fall smoking they are stamped out. When the cops charge, the students withdraw and counterattack. The view from the buildings of Nanterre shows clearly that, provided the students do not retreat, the cops retreat.

Yet, simultaneously, these troublemakers in effect provided the pretext for such an offensive, and this is exactly what the “moderate leftists” (also called “legal leftists”) reproach them for. Around the faculty of Nanterre there are housing projects, a shantytown, and factories. Since May, the General Workers’

Union (CGT) has actively sought to eliminate the militant leftist workers, to stifle criticism of its objectives and its modes of action. It should in fact be noted that never in the social history of this country has the union organization been confronted by such a significant element on its left. It is in the tradition of the “Communist” party to extend the hand of friendship to its right and to smash heads to its left (as Althusser would say, this is a “relic” of the Stalinist epoch), while all the time identifying those to the right with those to its left in its discourses. That is not particularly difficult to grasp, but it is nothing new either. We should perhaps examine the events themselves instead.

From around the end of January, leftist militants have been carrying out a campaign against increases in the Métro fares at the Marcel Sembat, Billancourt, and Pont de Sèvres stations, which serve the workshops of Renault at Billancourt. The campaign consists in encouraging a boycott of ticket punching *on the spot*, so that thousands of workers get out without paying. An embarrassing situation for the Métro unions. At the beginning of March, this campaign against the price increases shifts to the inside of the Renault company; the committee for the company, where the CGT is in the majority, had just raised the canteen prices. There are collisions and clashes at the Métro entrances and at the entrances to the canteen. The “communist” and assimilated press unleash their fury; for example, on February 14, the CGT Renault union calls on “the workers of the Renault factories to intervene massively to bring to their senses the fascist-Maoist gangs, which try to agitate the working class at the doors of the factories and the faculties and which profit from a troubling complicity.” This complicity appears in the fact that several militants who took part in the Métro campaign are accused and condemned to fines and prison sentences (suspended, it is true...).

The “rowdies,” as Séguy says (he is not compliant, but he gets an hour on the air with Descamps on Europe 1 on March 5), decide to not let the “communists” and their allies distribute their defamatory press inside the campus.⁹ Tuesday, February 10 (and/or Wednesday the 11th—witnesses disagree), the “communist” students who arrive at the university cafeteria are “kidnapped” one by one (I’m citing *La cause du peuple*, no. 17, February 21, which itself places inverted commas around *kidnapped*) and called to account for the defamation of the Maoists by the “communist” party press. “They were thrown out with a boot up the backside” declared the Maoist paper, not beating around the bush. On February 11, a fairly large (40 to 60) group of “communists” (the Union of “Communist” Students and “Communist” Youth and/or CGT) cleaned the hallways of the faculty of letters, destroying the posters and propaganda material of the *Gauche prolétarienne* and *Vive la révolution*; several militants from these organizations were attacked and wounded. It seems that the next day at noon, the secretary of the section of the CGT syndicate of administrative personnel was expelled

from the university cafeteria. In the afternoon, a Union of “Communist” Students group with helmets and clubs posted itself in the faculty of law, expecting an attack from the Maoists; a small group of CGT members stood ready to intervene, outside. The equally “armed” leftists did not consider themselves to be in a good tactical position and did not attack; the “communists” left (after having struck a militant of the Law Student’s Action Committee who was working in a classroom and sent him to the hospital), and the battle took place in the parking lot in front of the university library. There were wounded on both sides; a CGT militant had several skull fractures (it seems that he had acted as if he were aiming his car at his adversaries, and that he had been pulled out of it by them and beaten violently).

René Rémond, in the Council of February 24, drew a black picture of the “insecurity” that reigned throughout the university area and even in the classrooms of the faculty: break-ins, thefts, armed attacks, squatting in rooms, “young Arabs,” “North African adolescents.” The unofficial crèche that had been installed without authorization in an (empty) room of the faculty was considered by the reporter to be one of the crimes against common law. University opinion was really outraged: sticking blindly to the effects, it could not see that behind Rémond’s picture there is Beaujeu’s motion, that behind the “violence” something else was playing itself out that actually had nothing to do with the university as such. Even Kant did not dream of charging the sansculottes with infractions of common law, nor Hegel the soldiers

In order to remove a speedily built barricade from the alley in front of the law building, the cops use an armored bulldozer. At the same time it lets small groups of cops advance toward the sports ground, protecting them from the bombardments from the terrace of the law building. Finally, the driver tries to play skittles with the students, but the students dodge the bulldozer and reciprocate: they pursue it and smash its side-view mirrors and several side windows to pieces, but without managing to reach the driver, who is protected by a thick grille. The students only just fail in the attempt to unbalance and tip over the bulldozer, which does not return to the campus.

of Jena. The good souls who pose the problem of university “agitation” in terms of violence are not very far removed from the regime that intends to place the university within the jurisdiction of common law.

What happened next happened of its own accord: the Autonomous Union, the restoration party, strengthened by general disapproval and encouraged by the active anti-Maoist campaign of the “Communist” party, managed to have the streets of the campus opened to the police in the Council of February

20. This time, the coalition seemed general. Even the Communist League thought it worthwhile to equate “communists” and Maoists in its disapproval: these affronts, it writes (*Le Monde*, February 18), are the deed of “heirs of Stalinism, who want to make fratricidal practices arise again within the workers’ movement.” This little maneuver emerged from the meeting of March 6 on the campus and above all from that of March 18 at the Mutualité (in which the communists participated along with the Convention of Republican Institutions and the Socialist party); mostly, what emerged was the eternal delay of the Trotskyists.

Thus everything seemed settled, and the handful of itinerant anarchists seemed to have nothing left to do but go off elsewhere. The reader will have understood without my saying it that, given the atmosphere of restorationist lethargy characteristic of the life of the faculty since the beginning of classes in October, it seemed certain that the student body would give up its solidarity with these maniacs. On March 3, however, the third day of the opening of the campus, after a general assembly in room B2 stuffed to bursting point, a thousand students took to the “street” to demonstrate against the presence of the police; and when the police, attacked at the Porte de la Folie, tried to occupy the campus they received jeers and projectiles from almost the entire student body, who had retrenched and sealed themselves inside the buildings.

I am not praising either activism or violence.

Note rather that on three occasions, it was the movement (in this instance essentially some Maoists with whom, moreover, I do not find myself in agreement, as I will explain in a moment) that took the initiative: the campaign in the Métro, the campaign against press insults, the active refusal to accept opening the campus to the police. In this last case, any analysis such as “the students fought because the police forces paraded” must be rejected. Quite the opposite occurred: on the March 3, the police did not

In response to the beatings echoing from the terrace of the law building come the slogans chanted from all the floors of the faculty buildings—“This is only the beginning, let’s keep fighting,” “Cops off campus”—accompanied by banging of fists against the windows and of boards against the metal window frames. A chant noise, unified on the off beat that picks up again and breaks over the cops who beat on their shields in time to their chanting: “This is only the beginning, let’s keep fighting,” “Students S.S.”

show themselves on the campus; it was the students who went looking for them and forced them to withdraw, using the tactical advantage lent to them by the “extraterritoriality” of the university buildings. The fury of the police

and their explosion in front of the university cafeteria at the end of the day have no other cause. What matters here is not physical violence, but initiative. Initiative always presents itself as a transgression. In the Métro, a double transgression, both of the ticket booth where one should pay and of the public space in which one should not speak to one's neighbors; at the university cafeteria, transgression of the "freedom of the press"; on March 3, transgression of the plans decided on by the Faculty Council. And likewise in the factories and in offices, transgression of the plans decided on by the union.

This transgression is not offered, but carried out. This is the immense difference between the movement and the fringe groups [*groupuscules*]. The latter remain within the order of discourse; *all verbalized transgressions can be absorbed by the system*; the system incorporates a purely verbal critique within itself. Any word can be said around a committee table, can be made the object of a negotiation, of an arbitration. The transgression in deed can only scandalize; it constitutes a nonrecuperable critique; it makes a hole in the system; it installs, for an instant, a region in which relations are not mediated by the Métro ticket, by the ideology of the newspaper, by the university institution. A potentiality arises in the field of social experience. Talk arises again in the Salle des Pas Perdus at Saint-Lazare, in the homes of the immigrant workers.

"Political action implies a calculated use of violence, in which the chances of success are weighed," said Paul Ricoeur in a recent speech (*Le Monde*, March 13, 1970). Let's not get ironic about his own talents as a calculator, since the minister's response to his letter of resignation (*Le Monde*, March 18) is lesson enough concerning this "politics." The activity I'm trying to describe is obviously in flagrant contradiction of the "politics" of Guichard and Ricoeur. The latter is precisely a nonpolitics. It consists in defining "success" by a ridiculous quantitative change within the institution: a 3 percent increase in salaries spread out over a year; n percent of students admitted to university councils; at least four grades per semester to establish a unit of value for continuous assessment [*contrôle*];¹⁰ three minutes allowed in each working period to go to the washroom; a supposed fourth week of paid vacation; and so forth. "Successes" immediately annihilated by the infallible logic of the system, which has no need to calculate the use it makes of violence and contents itself with calculating the use made of capital; its basic violence consists in this equation: anything whatsoever=potential capital. This is the whole secret of the quantitative character of "successes": accounting is necessary, and it is the whole secret of their eminently transitory character that relative surplus value must be created.

What is called violence (which is never exploitation or alienation) is relegated to the position of an occasional complement to dialogue in this "politics": a partner leaves the committee room and signals his troops to

exercise some “violence.” Thus it is that the Transitional Council of Nanterre-Letters ordered a two-day strike on December 3 and 4, 1969, to obtain extra credits for activities; a strike suspended, moreover, at the end of one day because “at the end of a working meeting marked by a great cordiality, where (he had) been able to measure the respect accorded to our opinions” (circular signed Paul Ricoeur and dated December 3), the dean thought he could resume cooperation with the directors of the ministry. Very little violence, very sanitized; it has as its model the two-hour strikes, the revolving stoppages, the “days of action,” the motions, the delegations, and other bullshit with which the unions have amused the workers for decades. This “violence” is the other of discourse, but within discourse; it is the death of words, but as a simple moment of language; it allows the crude dialogue between leaders to pass as a class dialectic; it is reality become a simple appendix of the bureaucracy, an alibi that is only an alibi, the supposed cross that in fact adorns the rose the managers wear in their buttonholes. It is critique recuperated, Hegelianized, hermeneuticized.

The struggle at Nanterre is not “political”: it in no way aims to seize power in its present form, even political power. It is even less interested in introducing new interlocutors to the conference table. Its reach extends beyond the regime and the surface on which it pretends to act and invites us to join in discussion. The struggle directly attacks the *system*. In the sphere of the university, attacking the system cannot mean demanding supplementary credits or a “democratization” of teaching or an increase in the number of scholarships. The university belongs to the system insofar as the system is capitalist and bureaucratic. That it is capitalist does not mean that it belongs to a few large trusts (preferably foreign), but that now and then the system forces the university to function like an organization for the production of a

The cops take up positions in front of the buildings. The law faculty building comes out first: posted on the large terrace that encircles the building, behind a minibarricade set up in front of the entrance, the students force the cops to retreat. But doing this, the cops come within range of projectiles thrown from the buildings of the faculty of letters: caught between lines of fire, they have to retreat once more. At this moment, the campus is not simply opened to the police; the cops transform it into a theater of operations. They destroy a palisade to gain a few meters of space, the bulldozer brought as a reinforcement passes over the lawn as if it were waste ground and smashes in a car that blocks its retreat, the grenades thrown against the facade break the windows to reach the students. The transformation of the faculty grows. To reach the upper floors you have to move behind the barricades

that protect against the various projectiles thrown by the cops who are posted under the canopies that cover the entrance to the buildings. The terraces are more and more crowded, the tables are pulled out of the rooms to protect the occupants of the terraces from direct hits by grenades, while the chairs lose their legs at an accelerated rate. Driven back beyond the buildings, the cops are harassed by the students who have reoccupied the parterre until 7:00 p.m.

qualified labor force: "If the nation spends so much money and makes so many efforts for its university, it is to have a youth that works, that is serious and useful. Such are the object and the aim of the university" (Georges Pompidou, speech of March 13).

The university is the bureaucratic offspring of the bureaucratic system because it is the institution that gives access to all the other institutions. If you want a place in the system, you must have a quality label. No employment without a diploma, however small it is (if it doesn't work, it is because you are Portuguese, Algerian, or African). Hence proceeds the importance of the control of knowledge. How do you get your diploma? By accepting the division and presentation of subjects as they are currently taught; by accepting the discipline of institutions and the discipline of the pedagogical relationship. Functions of the teacher: to consume cultural contents in order to produce cultural contents that can be consumed by the students; to produce salable students (consumable labor force). Function of the students: to consume contents (with an eye to exams, to academic competition); to consume along with them the pedagogical forms that prefigure professional and social hierarchies. What the teachers are completely unconscious of, though the students sometimes perceive it, is that the only value that governs the real functioning of the teaching establishments is the same that operates openly at the surface of society: produce and consume no matter what, in ever-increasing quantity.

It becomes difficult to ignore, now, that the transmission of knowledge is at the same time the affirmation of the hierarchy and that it allows the preservation in people's minds of respect for powers exterior to teaching, the preservation of the power of capital. In relation to this, the dividing line does not lie between students and teachers, nor between progressives and conservatives. It cannot appear on the surface of the institutions, nor in the form of traditional political organizations.

The real critique of the system can only take place (at least at the moment, and for the foreseeable future) through interventions of the *here and now* kind, decided on and managed by those who make it. The critique of capitalism and of its university in meetings, even if they take place in the teaching

establishments, is immediately digested by the system. The organization and its discourse, even if they are revolutionary in their signified, are made of the same stuff as the objects of their criticism. This is where Maoism (I am only speaking of the Maoism we see in France) remains in its way highly ideological: if not always in its organizational forms, in any case in its discursive position. I have seen the Maoist film on Flins 1968–69: a propaganda film, identical in its procedure, in its relation to the spectator, to the improbable CGT film on May 1968.¹¹ Listen to Geismar speak from the podium of the March 16, 1970, meeting: encoded language, full of stilted phrases, a real stomach turner.¹² Perhaps worse: in attacking the “communists” for their revisionism, the Maoists cover up the essential element, which is the critique of bureaucracy. The break with Leninism is not consummated: that the USSR is revisionist means nothing more than this: it is a socialist state with a Bernsteinian deviation! There is a failure to identify the class nature of the relations of production in Russia.

Irritation, exhaustion, and exasperation among the cops: poorly coordinated offensives always followed by withdrawals, that is, by routs. To make up for the lack of action, which is taking place on the side of the students, the sergeants make their men carry out small-group maneuvers. The strategy is irresolute: orders and counterorders manifest the disagreements between the brass hats and the men in suits. Blatant errors provide the students with the spectacle of the cops sprinting desperately after being abandoned at the bottom of building C, under an avalanche of diverse missiles. The cops’ rage expressed itself, from the beginning, in their fighting methods: horizontal firing of lance grenades, the use of special weapons—gadgets, slingshots with steel balls, chair legs, stones, chlorine grenades, probably a few attack grenades—and toward evening damaging parked cars.

This is to say that even those who introduce profoundly different attitudes and modes of action into the struggle are not free of “political” phraseology and ideology. All the same, the important element is this new attitude that appears here and there in the world: to critique the system practically, by obliging it to throw aside the mask of legality in which it envelops the relations of exploitation and alienation, and to show itself in its truth. You may say that a boycott of ticket punching in three Métro stations will not overthrow capitalism. But let’s be understood: neither will the seizure of power by a large party of the Bolshevik kind. The results of experience are now conclusive. The latest generation of revolutionaries starts from these conclusions; it realized in May 1968 that an intervention on the spot and for the moment,

one that the adversary could not predict, was more capable of unbalancing it than any passively applied slogan whatsoever. But something more is needed.

In truth, what is required is an apedagogy. For a century the Marxist workers' movement has only *reversed* the conduct of its class adversaries. Its leaders, hierarchy, troops, schools, discourse, directives, tactics, and strategy all offered the inverted image of their bourgeois models. For a long time spontaneism was the only alternative to this mimicry by reflection. But spontaneism does not even represent for bolshevism what primitive Christianity is for the church; there is no reason to believe that the workers will of their own accord go so far as the practical critique of the system, even if it may be possible to imagine that sinners have no need of pastors to save themselves. The "here and now" attitude breaks with spontaneism just as it does with bolshevism. It does not propose the seizure of power, but the destruction of powers. It knows that until a significant minority of workers have managed a *de facto* break with the institutions by which they are infiltrated, a new class power will form itself again. This attitude itself only serves as an example of a break with the initial repression, that which made us forget to invent, decide, organize, execute. I call it apedagogy because all pedagogy participates in this repression, including that which is implied in the internal and external relations of the "political" organizations.

11

March 23

(Unpublished introduction to an unfinished book on the movement of March 22)¹

A historical phenomenon clearly and completely understood and reduced to an item of knowledge, is, in relation to the man who knows it, dead; for he has found out its madness, its injustice, its blind passion, and especially the earthly darkened horizon that was the source of its power for history. This power has now become, for him who has recognized it, powerless; not for him who is alive. The same youth...knows the magic herbs and simples for the malady of history.... It is no marvel that they bear the names of poisons: the antidotes to the historical are the “unhistorical” and the “superhistorical.”

Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*

Weapon and Critique

The only way to excuse having written a history book on the March 22 movement is for it not to be a book of history, for it not to dissolve the delirium, the unjustifiability, and the passion into a simple phenomenon to be understood. Rather, such a book must in its turn be an *event*, an event like the displacement and reinforcement of critique of which the March 22 movement was the head and arm for a few weeks. Furthermore, the “author” may in this way be able to discharge his debt toward his “object,” the debt he owes it for having got him out of the impasse between “militant” delirium and skepticism. Such an event would have critical momentum, and new weapons could be forged.

The explicit question of the March 22 movement is the critique of bureaucracy, not only of the state apparatus set against society, not only of

the (revolutionary) party that confronts the masses, not only of the organization of productive labor that stands against free creativity, but also of alienated life as a whole in place of—what? That is where the search must be made, and it is to this question that the activity of reflection must be dedicated: what is this *other* of capitalist-bureaucratic reality that the movement sought and, so to speak, *announced* in its practice?

The latent problematic of the March 22 movement was, following and alongside that of situationism, the critique of *representation*, of the exteriorization of activity and the products of activity, of the *mise en spectacle*² that positions actors as passive role players and “public opinion” as a passive spectator. The practical extension of this critique to the *political* sphere is perhaps what best characterizes the March 22 movement. Of course, it was preceded by a long anarchist antiorganizational tradition. Above all, each time the critique of capitalism turned to action, in 1871, in 1905 and 1917, in 1936, in 1956, the practical formation of workers’, soldiers’, and peasants’ councils had occurred, seizing the initiative from the existing parties. But the anarchists’ critique itself remained within the political sphere and the importance of the councils was only generally acknowledged (except by the Workers’ Council movements³) as a transitional moment in the process of the breakdown of previous power structures—as a formation destined to disappear once the new power structure was installed rather than as the very form by which power in general can be abolished.

Now if the May 1968 movement is going to have some repercussions, it is insofar as it managed to extend critique to many forms of representation, to the union, the party, to the cultural institution in the fullest sense, forms that “big politics,” including those of Trotskyists and Maoists, had ignored or considered epiphenomenal. On the contrary, the March 22 movement perceived these forms of representation as immediate and lasting obstacles to the liberation of potential critical energy. The historical—or rather *superhistorical*—importance of this extension of critique ought to be recognized. This destruction of representation in the sociopolitical sphere should be placed in parallel with the structural autocritiques carried out over the past century in mathematics, physical science, painting, music, and literature in turn. And yet, this “setting in parallel” is still insufficient. If it is true that politics is not just one sphere among others but the sphere in which all the spheres are represented and in which social activity is distributed among them, then the critique of politics is not parallel but transversal to the critiques carried out in the various spheres in question. Modern mathematics, Dada, Cézanne and the cubists, Heisenberg: these are indeed the true contemporaries of the young rowdies of Nanterre, but those rowdies, by extending their critique of representation to society itself, marked not only the end of specific spheres, but also the end of *specific ends*—an end that will obviously have to

be initiated many more times, but that is inescapable because it is, in a sense, already accomplished.

This is the question that this generalized critique has posed, and that is indeed the question of capitalism: What is its referential field, where is it coming from, whence does it speak and act? The question refers to an image (to a representation?) of nonrepresentational life, of spontaneity, of naturalness, of immediacy, of primitiveness, of the “nonreferential,” of something that is in touch, self-managed, in opposition to what is mediated, referred, constituted, managed by others. And here is where the critical contribution of the “author” ought to occur. Simplifying, I would say this: the movement opposed the (equally dead) freshness of Rousseauism to the heavy Hegelian corpse that occupies the place of philosophy in capitalist-bureaucratic reality. Rousseauism is another fantasy, one that can, moreover, easily become one of the component parts of the old fantasy. Here again is something on which to reflect, something that was the problem that haunted the events of May: What is the other of the system of mediations, the other of all possible recuperation?

A naive question, which seems to have to give way to deadly Hegelian good sense: everything that is initially *other* ends up taking a place within a system of relations, of systematically opposed *identities*. Did not the March 22 movement, which sought an alterity to the political system, itself end up appearing as a fringe group (even if it was “anti-fringe-group”?), end up playing a role on the very stage that it wanted to destroy? Further away and closer to us: hadn’t the union movement, which once took up arms against wage slavery, become an organization helping to govern the use of the labor force deep within the vast capitalist machine? It is easy to see how such considerations can lead one to renounce “transforming the world,” to advocate reforming the working of a system that “has the merit of existing,” to stick to the depressing “wisdom” of mediation and dialogue (which is in fact the whole political practice of the workers’ organizations).

The movement of May provides a proof that ought to be opposed to this gloomy perspective, the proof that critique will not fail to erupt, even in a strongly integrated system, and that the dream (the nightmare) of social and cultural peace is thus a destitute ideology. This factual proof alone forbids any faith in the spontaneity of the masses, any belief that the workers want self-management, or the conviction that the social entity will ever be able to be reached without an intermediary and that society can become transparent to itself. However, just such a philosophy could be found underlying the practice of the March 22 movement, sometimes explained in certain reflections, notably those on exemplary action.

To understand the movement as the emergence of authentic freedom in an alienated society is to fail utterly to grasp its true force, its virtue as an event.

Such an understanding merely opposes a metaphysics with another metaphysics, remains in the same sphere of thought and action. We have to get beyond the opposition between spontaneity and mediation, between the masses and the apparatus, between life and the institution. The importance of the March 22 movement also proceeds from the fact that it obliges one (at least if one does not begin by “liquidating” it by taking a politician’s or a historian’s point of view) to develop an understanding of the bureaucratic capitalist system and its disorder. This understanding must be one that breaks with the discourse of origins as well as with that of ends, with Rousseau as well as with Hegel, with spontaneism as well as with bolshevism. With Freud (but not with Marcuse or Reich), one can begin to perceive and roughly sketch out that “beyond” that Marx left undeveloped.

In what follows, the reader should not be surprised at not finding the *terminology* of the movement; referring to the documents will allow the measure of this distance to be gauged. Let me repeat that the *fact* of this separation from the terminology of the movement seems to me to attest to a fidelity to historical meaning and to the meaning of facts that the movement displayed, and also to a fidelity to the movement as a fact. The movement never existed, because it was not an institution. Consequently, if many (the “author” among them) were able to recognize their own thoughts and at times their ancient hopes in the movement, no one is entitled to say “it enacted what I always thought”; the opposite is true. No one had thought about what the movement did. The movement *turned out* this way, caught everything established and all thought (including revolutionary thought) off guard, offering a figure of what this society represses or denies, a figure of its unconscious desire. Taking this mode of “truth” into consideration, the movement must not be made to *take its place* within a system of knowledge. Rather, one must try to show how it defeated the *distribution of places* imposed by the capitalist-bureaucratic system.

The System and the Event

1. One can imagine any society as an ensemble of persons ruled by a system whose function would be to regulate the entry, the distribution, and the elimination of the *energy* that this ensemble spends in order to exist. “Objects” (things, but also women and words, as Lévi-Strauss teaches) would only be specific concrete instances of this energy; institutions would be operators that make this energy usable by the ensemble, make it able to circulate within it. The institution, far from being only what presents itself as such to the observer, would in general be any stable formation, explicit or not, transforming related energy into bound energy⁴ within a given field of the circulation of objects (the linguistic field, the matrimonial field, the economic field, etc.).

2. The accent would thus be placed on the energetic aspect (“economic,” as Freud said of the psychic apparatus) of the institutional function rather than on its semantic or semiological function. A considerable difference: an approach guided by the model of structural linguistics alone does not allow one to understand the functioning of symbolic systems like those described by Mauss, nor even the appearance of (“revolutionary”) events in a semantically “well-regulated” system like that of modern capitalism. In the former case as in the latter, there is a dimension of *force* that escapes the logic of the signifier: an excess of energy that symbolic exchange can never regulate, an excess that “primitive” culture thematizes as debt; a “disorder” that at times shakes the capitalist system and produces events in it that are initially *unexchangeable*.

3. In the division of scientific labor, the task of constructing the system of regulation falls to political economy, social anthropology, linguistics, and so on. If history were included, it would take the role of considering the event. One could call an event the impact, on the system, of floods of energy such that the system does not manage to bind and channel this energy; the event would be the traumatic encounter of energy with the regulating institution.

4. Capitalism is a system structured as a regulator of growth (to speak in cybernetic terms); in principle it allows the introduction, the circulation, and the elimination of ever greater quantities of energy. The general principle that governs the entrance of new quantities of energy is that of exchange value: energy being the labor force and labor time its unit of exchange in the system, any object can enter into the system provided that it is exchangeable for another object containing the same number of units of energy. It is immediately clear, from the element of absurdity in such a formulation, that it contains the enigma of increased accumulation or, simply, of surplus value. The ideology of “growth,” of “development,” of “enrichment” that Marx uncovers and criticizes consists in obscuring this *overabundance*, the surplus that a “primitive” society on the contrary knows how to recognize as its own disruption and that it seeks to harness in the symbolic. (By calling it labor force, Marx is perhaps only forcing bourgeois political economy to recognize that *there is, in capitalism too, a debt*, and that the creditor is the proletariat.)

5. The event in capitalist society, as we know, can arise from two situations: either the system of exchange value, in extending itself to precapitalist social regions, encounters institutions that are incompatible with its principle of functioning; or energy refuses to be harnessed, bound, and circulated in the “objects” of the system. In the latter case (the only one that counts if it is true that, here at the end of the twentieth century, bureaucratic capitalism seems likely to exhaust all the precapitalist institutions, such as religion, family, property, labor, decency), it would be necessary to distinguish between events

of a quantitative order, so to speak, and a much more enigmatic, qualitative order of events. We can draw an idea of the former from what political economy calls a crisis of overproduction or technological unemployment: these are blockages (moments of stasis) in the circulation of energy, in the form of unexchangeable products or labor force. Such stases have gravely endangered the system (1929–52) though they have not destroyed it; indeed, in the final analysis these quantitative events provided the system with the chance to improve its capacity to bind energy (modern capitalism). However, the qualitative event occurs when the very forms through which energy is rendered circulable (the institutions, in the sense that I have given to the term) cease to be able to harness that energy—they become obsolete. The relationship between energy and its regulation undergoes a mutation. This enigma is thus the only event worthy of the name, when the regulator encounters energy that it cannot bind. There are models of this event in the pictorial crisis of the beginning of the quattrocento, and in the appearance of entrepreneurs in Flanders a century later. I insist on the fact that in both cases, the established institution (the Gothic international in art, the corporation in economies) *was running perfectly* at the time.

6. This “economic” description returns us to a theory of desire. The system, with its bindings, its repetitions, and its accidents, is analogous to a “libidinal system,” which may be neurotic, psychotic, or perverse. The objects that appear within the system are set up so that desire (eros and the death drive)⁵ is fulfilled in their production and in their destruction. A positioning of desire underlies all social systems, a positioning that of course differs between “primitive” society (cf. Mauss) and capitalist society (cf. Marx). The event, as a qualitative force, is an inexplicable mutation in the position of desire: for example, where desire was *repressed* in the object (in religious societies, where debt is acknowledged), it will appear *foreclosed* (in the scientific, economic, political, etc. “positivism” of post-Renaissance and capitalist society).

7. The March 22 movement is tuned into all three kinds of turmoil: it belongs to the crisis of the university and the social crisis, but it owes its proper dimension to the space that it has created, even though it is minimal and violated by ideologies, for a mutation in the relation between what is desired and what is given, between potential energy and the social machinery. The movement’s participation in the first two orders of events and its attempt to respond to them, to provide a cure or solution, situates it like any other group within the order of *politics*, as an institution with the function of regulating the flow of energy in the system according to its specific fashion but just like other institutions. But insofar as the March 22 movement belongs to the third type of event, it has performed a work of unbinding, an antipolitical work, that brings about the collapse rather than the reinforcement of the system.

A Book of Antihistory

It is clear why history seems to us to also be an institution contributing to the general work of the binding of energy. A historian of May and a disciple of Isaac Deutscher, who can hardly be suspected of conservatism, involuntarily confirms this in this statement: “A historical fact can be interpreted, studied, exploited, and acted upon—or it can be ignored. To a great extent the outcome of the next crisis depends on the seriousness and skill with which the contesting parties will profit from the lessons of previous experience.”⁶ “To profit” is to produce the theoretical and practical apparatuses that will allow free energy to be bound the next time that it attacks the system. Writing a history book always aims to produce a *historian’s knowledge* as its content, that is, a discourse that is at once consistent and complete, in which the non-sense of the event will be rendered intelligible, fully signified, and thus in principle predictable. It is to seek to institutionalize something that appeared at the time as foundationless, anarchic. To do so is to contribute to *power* by destroying *force*.

Despite its “author,” this book will assuredly accomplish, in its turn, this work of binding, of recuperation. However, it bears the traces of the potential incomprehensibility of the events of May and of the potential antipolitics of the March 22 movement.

In the first place, it seemed to me necessary to let the movement speak for itself by printing many unpublished documents. I do not claim that this book is the book of the movement (which would be impossible anyway), but it is desirable for readers to take on most of the responsibility for constructing an understanding of the facts for themselves.

Secondly, in the “economic” hypothesis that I advance, the value of discursive documents, written or spoken (that is, the value of documents as bearers of *signification*), must not be privileged. Rather, priority should be accorded to acts, gestures, situations, silences, or even intonations, to all the traces of a *sense* that is transmitted in spite of discourse rather than by it, a sense that for this reason is usually considered to be non-sense and is therefore not taken into consideration by the historian. The chapter on the “facts” is in reality an inventory of these *figures*⁷ of the March 22 movement. Two things are clear from the comparison of these figures to the *discourses* of the movement: first, that the mainspring of the movement is provided by several events blocked together. Above all, however, the most important of these events, the mutation of desire in regard to the system, did not in most cases find its words in the movement, even as it projected its figures onto it.

Finally, readers should not expect a *narrative* of the deeds and gestures of the movement in this book. If there is no narrative here, it is because narrative is a figure of discourse that lends its form to myth and tale, and

that has, like them, the function of distributing the “facts” in a necessarily instructive succession, the function of drawing a “moral,” so that the story always fulfills a desire, above all the desire that temporality should make sense and history should be signifiable, a desire that it fulfills by its very form. It is time to get rid of the illusion that universal history provides the universal tribunal, that some last judgment is prepared and fulfilled in history. The events of the March 22 movement contributed energetically to the destruction of this religiopolitical ideology, in the manner in which I hope this entirely analytic account (in which the figures of the movement are arranged according to their value as events in relation to the system, rather than by virtue of their relevance to a teleology) will make its contribution. A list of the interventions of the March 22 movement, classified according to the institutional regions affected, is thus provided under the heading of *facts*. I would like to emphasize that the order of presentation of these regions has no particular significance.

12

Concerning the Vincennes Psychoanalysis Department

(1975)
(with Gilles Deleuze)

What has happened recently at the faculty of Vincennes in the psychoanalysis department is apparently quite simple: the firing of a certain number of part-time teachers for reasons of administrative and pedagogical reorganization. In an article in *Le Monde*, Roger-Pol Droit nevertheless asks if it is not a matter of a Vichy-style purge. The process of termination of employment, the choice of those fired, the handling of opposition, and the immediate naming of replacements could indeed remind one, mutatis mutandis, of a Stalinist operation. Stalinism is not the monopoly of the communist parties; it has also occurred in leftist groups, and psychoanalytic associations have been no more immune to its influence. This would seem to be confirmed by the lack of resistance shown by those sacked and by their allies. They did not actively collaborate in their own trials, but one can imagine that a second wave of purges might bring things to this point.

The question is not one of doctrine but of the organization of power. Those in charge of the psychoanalysis department, who carried out these sackings, declare in official texts that they are acting on the instructions of Dr. Lacan. He is the one who inspires the new statutes, he is even the one to whom, if need be, candidacies will be submitted. He is the one who is calling for a *return to order*, in the name of a mysterious “matheme” of psychoanalysis. It is the first time that a private person, whatever his competence may be, has arrogated to himself the right to intervene in a university to carry out, or to have carried out, a unilateral reorganization entailing dis-missals and appointments of teaching personnel. Even if the whole psychoanalysis department were in agreement, the affair and the threat it conceals would remain the same. The Freudian School of Paris is not only a group that has a leader, it is a very centralized association that has a clientele, in every sense of the word. It is difficult to imagine how a university department could subordinate itself to an organization of this kind.

What psychoanalysis presents as its knowledge is accompanied by a kind of intellectual and emotional terrorism that is suitable for breaking down resistances that are said to be unhealthy. It is already disturbing when this operation is carried out between psychoanalysts, or between psychoanalysts and patients, for a certified therapeutic goal. But it is much more disturbing when the same operation seeks to break down resistances of a completely different kind, in a teaching section that declares itself to have no intention of “looking after” or “training” psychoanalysts. A veritable unconscious blackmail is directed against opponents, under the prestige and in the presence of Dr. Lacan, in order to impose his decisions without any possibility of discussion. (Take it or leave it, and if you leave it, “the disappearance of the department would be imperative, from the point of view of analytic theory as well as from that of the university...”—*disappearance decided on by whom? in whose name?*). All terrorism is accompanied by purifications: unconscious washing does not seem any less terrible and authoritarian than brainwashing.

13

Endurance and the Profession (1978)

It has become an enviable rarity these days to obtain a salary in exchange for the kind of discourse that is commonly called philosophy. As the twentieth century draws to a close, the statesmen and families who run the French secondary school system seem to want to have nothing to do with it. For according to the spirit of the times, which is theirs, to do is to produce—that is, to reproduce with a surplus value. Those who teach philosophy are thus condemned to decimation or worse, while those who have studied remain unemployed or give themselves up as hostages to other professions. Here, we will turn our attention to a minor but unexpected consequence: despite the adverse pressures in the socioprofessional context, and at a time when the philosophy department at Vincennes (University of Paris VII) has been stripped of its right to grant those degrees and research diplomas that it is a university department's duty to issue, the rate of attendance in philosophy courses has, little by little, been on the rise.

Why do they come? One day you asked this question solemnly during class. They told you it was their business, not yours.

A public institution of higher learning is by law an organ by which a nation ensures the education of its children. The state is the guardian of such institutions. When the state removes all credibility from the department of philosophy at Vincennes, one expects it to die out. But the nation's children—grown-up children at that, and even foreigners—persist in attending the courses in large numbers. Would you conclude that the mere existence of this department refutes the ideas of the state and of its educational guardians?

You enter; they are waiting for you. You have nothing in particular, nothing set to say, which is the general condition of philosophical discourse. But here, in addition, you have no long- or short-range aim set by an institutional function (to prepare degrees, monitor competitions, follow programs and syllabi, and keep track of things through examinations). There you are, given over to indeterminate requirements. (You are generally a few readings ahead

of them, but in any case readings done with the frightful and shameful disorder of the philosopher).

Does this mean that each teacher in your department speaks of what he or she likes?—No, it means that no one is protected, and above all in his or her own eyes, by prescribed rules. And all must give their names to what ward what they want in order to say it.—You're exaggerating.—Don't forget they wait for you every week; and without telling you what they're they say, without pleading necessity; and all, like stutterers, must head to expecting.—All the same, you know what you are driving at...—for the day's session, yes, very precisely; for example, demonstrating the machinery of an "antistrephon" put in the mouth of Protagoras by Diogenes Laertius.—So, you really did have an idea in the back of your mind!

Is it an idea, this strength of weakness that, from year to year, makes you believe that with the analysis of this or that fragment of Diels and Kranz, and with many others like it, some in the discernible framework of the week's thought, others at the horizon, for later on, two months, a semester from now, eventually you'll succeed?

—Succeed at what? at holding on for another year?—It's not to be laughed at. You're in free-fall in the atmosphere and it's a matter of not landing too hard. So you're crafty, you stall. So, this slowdown, due to an institutional void, which is the opposite of the feverishness experienced by a teacher anxious to cover course work in a limited time, creates or presupposes a soft and gentle "tempo."—That of research?—No, you've known researchers in the exact sciences. Their rhythm is one of athletic, economic, bureaucratic competition. More like the rhythm of study. But not of studies. Studies are something you work at, you pursue. In these classes, study goes along in its own way. You announce that you will study Thucydides, and three years later you still haven't begun.

—But yet, you, too, want something.—When one was younger, one might have wanted to please, or help, or lead by argument or revelation. Now, it's all over. You no longer know exactly what's wanted. How can you make others understand what you haven't really understood? But when the course works out well, you also know that since you made them understand what you didn't, it didn't really work out. The anguish, when you enter the classroom, especially at the beginning of the year, is not the stage fright of the actor or the orator (although it can be), the feeling of claustrophobia (all of us will burn in here), or the predicament of not knowing everything (rather reassuring). It is the sovereign pressure of an imbecilic "you must go there," which does not say where.

Just two years ago, this or that leftist commando was bursting in, denouncing the magisterial function, the star system, alienation, apathy; cutting the electricity; raising his clubs; locking up the teacher awhile; and

abusing the students. In their eyes, our palaver, our readings, our affectations are gimmicks at best, and at worst treasons; for them, it's a state of war, an emergency. To ponder a metalepsis in the narration of book 9 of *The Laws* is not futile, it's criminal. They know where to go.

We used to fight a bit. Only once did it lead to something worthwhile. It was on the day of an active strike. What could we do? At the time we were working on the operators in persuasive discourse, making use of Plato's dialogues and Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Sophistic Refutation*. We subjected the statements relative to the strike to the same analysis. Once again we were speaking of Platonic pragmatics. Enter the commando unit armed with clubs, shouting that we were breaking the strike. A fight starts, quickly followed by palavers between the two groups, the besiegers and the besieged. The latter argue as follows: on the one hand, our "normal" activity is to study persuasive discourse, especially political discourse. On the other hand, to participate in an active strike is to occupy the workplace and to think together about the discourses that persuade or dissuade us from striking. The difference between these two activities is not distinguishable. You demand that it be, and you think it could be if we used certain words (*exploitation, alienation...*), a certain syntax ("it is not by chance that..."), certain names (Marx...). Question: In your eyes, how many Marxes per sentence would it take for our discourse to become one of active strikers? Most of the assailants backed off, admitting that we were as much "out of it" as they were.

The rhythm of work in progress seems tentative and peaceful. But on the occasion of each of these pointless classes, it becomes asceticism, impatience, and fear. You get up well before dawn and tell yourself that this particular part of the current work has to be done for tonight—for example, express the temporal logic of Protagoras's antistrephon before midnight—because the day after tomorrow you must explain it to those who are waiting for you. By looking straight at them, and not at your notes. And, as you aren't protected by an institution, make them furthermore understand that it's opportune or bearable to speak about such things.

So you sit down at your desk, and nothing has ever assured you that, by midnight, you will have understood. What if you didn't understand? Or what if it were to take longer than expected? What if you were extremely tired? Or what if you entertained the idea that, after all, who gives a damn about the antistrephon of Protagoras or another? Or else, what if you got your hands on a good Italian or American article supplying the interpretation you had imagined yourself giving?

In this last case, you're happy, you'll be able to do your course with this article. But at the same time, you're annoyed: there's something you have received and transmitted without transformation, without being transformed

by it. This isn't work. You put it off till next week. What are you thus putting off? Confrontation, challenge, and the judgment of God. This is why you can wade through the antistrepha; I mean, dabble around them for six months. Audiences are surprising.

Sometimes you allow yourself to think that your working notes keep accumulating, you're making progress. But, with age, you know the opposite is true, that you hoard waste, scraps, that the thing to be thought slips away from you, as in interminable evasions and metastases.

As for making this mortification the substance of what you have to say, this seems henceforth a paltry resource. For such a solution proceeds only from your memory, allowing you to compare what you wanted to obtain with what you hold, and not from your imagination, which is indifferent to your grasp of anything. Moreover, here, amnesia rules. So much so that it is not even true that anything "slips away." Don't be satisfied with this shoddy pessimism. There's nothing to compare.

A few books are written this way out of the weekly rumination. There was a horizon sketched, uncertain. You have made headway here and there for two, three, four years. Sometimes bits of analyses are already published as articles. Nevertheless, you collect all of those attempts and you publish them as a book. Producing such a book means only one thing: that you're fed up with this approach, this horizon, this tone, these readings. Of course, the notes and even the parts already written don't exempt you from writing the book; that is, from rethinking almost everything. But you do it to get it over with. What makes you happy, gives you the sense of well-being you have with the book, is that you'll be done with the work. Whereas teaching is as endless as study itself.

But in order to finish and thus write the book, you must reach a certain satisfaction with what you thought, or believed you thought. And this is so to speak a grace momentarily granted, and you're truly unfortunate if you don't jump to exploit it. But also unfortunate if it stays with you. The media have the truly unintelligible habit of making you speak about your latest book. How do you convince the *mediators* that, obviously, you wrote it to be done with it, and that once done, it really is finished? They believe it is false modesty. And they say they're doing you a favor. You become proud, you forget about this sort of publicity, you rely on another kind of distribution, osmosis or capillary action. After a little while, you no longer have a choice.

You aren't cut out for thinking; you're a philosopher. You believe it's not natural to think. You are envious of—but after all you disdain—your colleagues and friends who work in the human sciences, who seem to be in symbiosis with their work, who have a corpus, a method, a bibliography, a strategy, exchanges. That's what makes you different even from those close

to you, like historians of philosophy, whom you admire nonetheless. You like what is unfinished. Nothing of what you write will be authoritative. You lend yourself willingly to this prescription: “to go there, without knowing there.” You’re certain that nobody can do it, least of all yourself. You know you’re doing what you’re not cut out to do. You’re an imposter. You hate all this. Little by little you cease to draw any vanity from it. And this department at Vincennes, if it is pleasant, it is because its total lack of aims and imposed airs lends itself to surprisingly few bursts of vanity: imposters cannot be convicted here, the masks hold, and so does honor. You don’t edit a journal, you’re not a school.

The media and the worldly wise smile in vain at your humility, insinuating that many paths lead to importance, and that to vegetate in your prefab bungalow in “the sticks” is one way to acquire it—but you know this isn’t true. In better established professorships you become tempted to say what should be thought. Here, in Vincennes, this infatuation is not protected.

This doesn’t at all prevent this pitiful state of affairs from trading on its misery and catching the eye of a few cynics. You fight it, eliminating from your discourse most connotations, making yourself, if possible, even more temperate and meticulous. For example, you give up the metaphysical euphoria of energies and convert to logic, especially that of prescriptives, severe and fastidious. Now, this dissuades a few cynics from staying, but not the most cynical.

—They would have a certain function in your economy, as long as they also force you incessantly to take a new line. And after all, how do you know what their cynicism is all about?

Taking a new line: the metaphor is reassuring. What is behind you isn’t more certain than what you are facing; in fact, it’s more uncertain. To go beyond is an idea that makes you smile. What has been studied energetically for a year, two years, ten years you’ve let lie fallow. Study doesn’t order it; it disorders. They tell you to keep your cool.

Which you wouldn’t be doing if you believed that what you have to do is name the unnameable, say the unsayable, conceive the unconceivable, pronounce the unpronounceable, or decide the undecidable—and this is what it means to philosophize. You leave these poses to others.

Of course you speak of what you don’t comprehend. But it doesn’t necessarily follow that it’s incomprehensible. You read and give your course to see if others, by chance, might have understood. The idea of a mission fades away.

They ask questions. So sometimes questions are posed, and sometimes people are only posing as they question. You’re caught between your duty to listen and be patient and your right to impatience. Others write to you,

point to references, share thoughts—and question. A few are or will be your mentors.

You try for two kinds of understanding: first, that which permits you to situate the antistrephon of Protagoras within the writing of temporal logic tomorrow. A strong understanding, and ultimately useless. The other is totally different: to learn obscurely, after months and years of study, why this bizarre verbal argument interested you. You first included it within a general examination of ruse, for example, and that had attracted you because you saw it as a weapon against the powerful. We're weak, you used to say as a justification. All this seemed directed toward some political end; you were inspecting the available arsenal. You easily refuted those who judged you as too picky, too slow in moving on toward action. You compared the funeral oration of Overney by Geismar with the one Socrates parodies in *De Sophistis Eleuchis*. You analyzed the jail letters and the declarations of the RÖTE ARMEE FRAKTION [Red Army Fraction], in the file constituted by Klaus Croissant, in the light of the alternative between the nonpedagogical struggle and the Platonic pragmatics of dialogue. The antistrephon found its place naturally in this general strategy and you studied it as such. Now, two and a half years later, you confess the vanity of your Manichaeism. The antistrephon may very well be a weapon at the disposal of the weak; it is also the strength of philosophical discourse, for this latter is made up of reflexive (or speculative) statements of which it is one type. Your general approach to paradoxes is mollified by it, as are your "politics." You say so. Your listeners, especially foreigners from poor countries, believe that with this move you have lost even more pugnacity, that you have become even more of a product of that cold thought and refined style that they call French and that exasperates them. On your side, little by little you stop justifying your interests, your tribulations, giving a good front to your disorder. It can even look like a challenge.

Who's going to follow you if you no longer even say where you want to go? But you take a certain pleasure in this silence. You feel its opacity as an interesting resource against Hegelianism or absolutism in general. You think you're making a contribution, however minute, to the destiny of what you believe philosophy to be: figuring, and not just conceiving. You find yourself in agreement with this department, which is a figure now more than an organ.

The concessions to what you feel is expected become rarer. You'd like to neglect even what your own mind desires, make it accessible to thoughts it doesn't expect. You don't read anymore to strip authors, but to steal away from yourself. You aim at this deculturation in every direction: science fiction, underground cinema, linguistics, and singular logics, monsters of plastic and

sound, surprising banalities, oblique rereadings. You are unfaithful in your alliances like the barbarians of Clastres,¹ but for a different reason, opposite at least. You're at war with institutions of your own mind and your own identity. And you know that with all this, you're probably only perpetuating Western philosophy, its laborious libertinage, and its obliging equanimity. At least you also know that the only chance (or mischance) to do so lies in setting philosophy beside itself.

14

Ersiegerungen

(1989)

U. is guiding me.¹ We enter the lounge. S. is in the process of picking up the reins after his absence. You sit attentive, the semester gets going, you greet our arrival by banging on the table with your fist, S. picks up on it. This is not the climate of a much more ostensibly self-governing American seminar.

I come here with the assurance that we will speak freely about everything, like last year. But what everything? Everything that is attached to the name of Germany for a French philosopher of my age: a language, a way of being and thinking, acquired as well as can be expected as a child, through Schiller, Heine, Rilke, as an adolescent through Hofmannsthal and Storm; spat out, interrupted by the occupying forces; the moan of a young dying soldier, "Mutter," on a stretcher in the aid station at the Passage Saint André des Arts, July 1944, Paris; taken up again as a dead language from Husserl, Marx (1844 manuscripts, '44 once again, my twenties), from Hegel, Freud, Frege, Nietzsche, later Kant, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Adorno. Throughout my life, Germans on my bedside table.

The anguish of your impossible identity come to nurture my melancholy and retard its resolution, behind the mask of the brave bicentennial citizen. Is it always your anguish? Have you forgotten everything? Become excellent students? Honest Lutherans or Catholics? Accomplished postmoderns? Can you share this ridiculous pain that I believe comes to me from you?

It is, after all, your affair. Are you telling me to mind my own business? I feel myself burdened by a concern, burdening you with a presumption, both too European. My excuse for this sentimental Europe is that political masters, German or French, have both created and devastated it for centuries in order to carry out the program of an empire. The heritage of forced union must be worked out, and a horizon of thought drawn from it.

This intention substantiates, in my eyes, though you know nothing of it, my concern, my pain, and my presence. I come with my “Jewish question.” To make it understood that it is the question that must not be forgotten, after your Third Reich, which forced Europe to forget this question. And with this question, to forget one of the secrets, perhaps the most secluded secret, *abgeschieden*, of Europe’s thought.

I come with my weakness or my lack of proper thought, with an endemic historicism, with the presumption to diagnose my time. My times, for the age puts time in the plural. Diagnostics puts it in the past. I always diagnose “postsomethings,” stupidly: postwar, post-Marxism, and postrevolution, post-1968, postmodernism. Thus revealing the stubborn persistence of a single sickness, that of diagnosing.

My unconscious whispers to me that there ought to be an incommensurability between a young German student and an old philosopher “à la française.” The misunderstanding ought to be as inevitable as that between an old man and a young girl. Will it nevertheless be possible to touch you? And for you to touch me? I look at you, impenetrable.

I announce the program of the seminar: to supplement *Le différend* in terms of space, time, and the body. A university gesture that I love, in which the sobriety of the enunciation of a problem placates the anxiety from which it is born.

An opportunity, I add a little more pathetically, to critique the rampant communicationalist ideology, aesthetics, the problematic of representation, the politics of forgetting. Four large sessions, then. We’ll begin around two or three in the afternoon, we’ll find ourselves ending at eleven at night. Without counting the interminable discussions at the Rimini.

It will have pleased you, it seems to me, to see that I did not know what I was talking about; that I “felt” my way along, firm on some points, as when a blind person assures himself of the identity of an object with his hands, uncertain about the others. We wander across questions and answers, in the three languages (S. adds a little Spanish). We pose reference points. I will have taught you only one thing, that there is no method in the first place. You are kindly told: that is called thinking.

The role of English between you and me. The neuter. The guarantee that no one is gaining the advantage by using his mother tongue. I speak it much worse than most of you. That wonderfully undermines a position of authority. You take charge of me as of a debutante.

We are making sand castles of thoughts together. I think it was Schiller who wrote that nothing is more serious than the game. But not every game is serious. If it were serious, one would find that out later on, perhaps. You keep an eye on each other, like children making sure that the others play by the rules. When one of you lets himself go too far in the direction of parody or pathos, the brows are knit, you give questioning looks, bothered.

S. untiring *Sprecher*. Picks up on my argument every time, displays, fixes, and transcribes it into points to be questioned. Your big brother, my younger brother.

Not a second of boredom during these sessions. Hours of boredom during the ecology conference. I dispel them to observe an unknown lovely face. During a pause, I go to apologize for my insistence on her. She bears the name of her eyes, Waltraud.

The tables are arranged in an irregular circle. The central space is empty. Sascha, D.B.'s dog, dwelt there peaceably during the interminable ecology discussion. Smiles, giggles, looks, heads tilted or raised circulate swiftly from one side to the other, weave the tense network of the things left unsaid.

Do you form a group other than by virtue of S.'s presence? Is your relation anything other than functional? I catch signs of particular affinity between some of you. But I can't be sure. Our lengthy association, in the course of which the most serious questions are engaged, will remain within the bounds of tact.

Sometimes you are loquacious, vehement: W., M. Cheerful and sad: R. As lively in questioning as an American student: K. Passing wicked notes, slid down tables, like an Italian: O. Reserved and direct: V. Somber and slow: B. Scatterbrained: F. After forty years of teaching, I feel a real pleasure at a time when I believed myself to be insensible to the ritual and the habits of school. And the smooth eyes of I., a wall of lapis lazuli.²

And in general, the fact that you are Germans surprises me.

I find you to be the kind of Germans that frighten me at the time of the clumsy final ceremony. (For the reader: they had the idea of putting a crown of laurels on my head on the last day.) Of course, the Greek student was given the task of anointing. It was the act of a great naked affection (I'm trying to play upon your *Akt*). You laughed. I was touched by the awkwardness [*maladresse*] of the testimony: poorly addressed [*mal adressé*]. You knew it, I knew it. It was funny because it was sad. But it's difficult to say what kind

of sadness this was. We were going to leave one another, we were touched, had we understood each other? We refrained from being too serious and too funny.

You know, one thing comes back to me, evident today, essential—your absence of toadying. And its opposite, the absence of aggressiveness. Rarities in the teacher-student relation. At least I did not have any sense of either. Even in the car heading for the return (or departing) flight, R. and K. make me give yet another small talk, informally, on the question of sexual difference. You had the virtue of occasionally setting my thought in order, by questioning, objecting, resisting, documenting. Isaac's *Akeda* kept on giving us food for thought, thanks to R.

You called me “philosopher, the philosopher.” It was ironic. Germany is filled with philosophers, as always. But most of you were not philosophers. And as for me, I am not one in the German sense, you know (Sch. in Apel's seminar in Bad Homburg: how do you expect us to believe that you are philosophers, you write!)

We must (we, French “philosophers”) play a double game in Germany, in the United States, in Italy, everywhere where we run up against the disciplinary structure established by the constitution of the University of Berlin at the beginning of the last century, which has been adopted almost everywhere.

The *Kolleg* follows a completely different model, like the American humanities centers, where the “disciplines” cross, confront one another, make each other undisciplined. In the same way as, in a context different from that of Berlin, the Polytechnic Institute of Philosophy at the University of Paris VIII, and especially the International College of Philosophy.

To sum up, it is only in this frayed and rewoven tissue, wherever it may have been found, Penelope-like, that we have been able to “teach”—I mean: reflect publicly in common. In this dump where the thoughts of each are transplanted and placed side by side right on the table of thought. To institute, or quasi institute, this rather vague place is to give it a name that authority can tolerate, to offer credits, to become able to grant degrees, and to prove that it can train acceptable graduates, indeed more-than-acceptable ones.

It is a place that remains suspect, under surveillance, surrounded by prejudices, hostility. It has to be defended, and in order to defend it, it has to be constantly criticized. This critique forms part of the objects of discussion and debate in this place. Quite evident in the *Kolleg*. The institution of the *Kollege* contains the critique of its institution within itself. It is never safe from a summary administrative decision nor from accusations of superficiality,

of a late-sixties mentality, of demagogic, of media small talk. Nonetheless, in this dump, rich or poor according to the country or the moment, the question is posed and has to be posed of what thought requires to find its place and an occasion today. How could it do without not only the philosophical tradition, of course, but also the question of its unconscious, of what mocks thought in literary, artistic, and scientific work, in political and religious institutions, in contemporary internationalism? We dream of a collegial network of European colleges.

“The philosopher” did not come to teach you philosophy (impossible, says Kant), he came to make what he believed he had thought bend under the requirements of other regimes of thought. *Exerciti:* we tested ourselves.

N.L., hardly loquacious, calculating his words with his Baudelairean elegance (which is much more than a systematic strategy), knows this kind of complexity. He wants to simplify a different kind of complexity. And he can only do it at the cost of a supplement of differentiation. It is this apparent “aporia,” assumed with calm and tact, that I liked most in his thought, from which I am in a sense so distant. It was possible for us to form a small common front against the waves of ecologist eloquence. A two-sided front. There is no nature, no *Umwelt*, external to the system, he explained. And I added: of course, but there remains an oikos, the secret sharer [*hôte*] to which each singularity is hostage.

There remains a remainder. I called it *unbehandlich*(?), intractable. No, I said it more pathetically, *abgeschieden*.

It was a good thing to use guerrilla tactics against both ecologist phraseology and communicationalist ideology (with its often scatterbrained desire to restore the *Öffentlichkeit*),³ it was a good thing to recall the *Unheimliche*.⁴

Siegen must represent more or less what happens to a *Heim* (the generic mode of being of Germans [in my prejudice]) when it is subjected to development. The church and its large village perched on a hillside, the highways crossing around it, businesses, industries, and offices flanking the valley road that has become the main street with its rush hours, traffic lights, and so forth. Double sadness, that of a culture of the land and that of a culture of communication [*messagerie*], the former asphyxiated by narrowness of spirit, the second by vacuity (the medium is the message).⁵

We, *Kollegiaten*, lodged on the opposite hill, are contented by nothing. It is what we call culture, this well-meaning nastiness. The result is that Siegen isn’t sad.

One or two Sundays, we wander in the hills and the landscaped forests, we enter into the hostels full of humans come from secondary culture to reimmerse themselves in primary culture. We view all of this—the large sterile lands of Westphalia or the Westerwald, the *Holzwege*, and the soups, the beers—with the eye of the third culture. This frightens me a little. One might say that they dwell in the village as if it were part of the culture of communications, and, especially, the culture of communications as if it were a village. But this isn't true. They come on vacation to the *pagus*, and not to be *at home*,⁶ on the margins of the *Heim*, in order to take in the air of the indeterminate. What difference, after all, from the visitors to Joshua Tree National Park in California? A single, terrible one. An American is always an immigrant, without *Heim*.

The Europe that we built at Siegen, briefly and to some extent, will only be made in Europe if its nationals emigrate right where they are. Become indeterminate. *Kollegiaten*, we were certainly not good villagers, and we did not want to be the talented messengers that the megalopolis claims for its own. We tried to work through our moments of rootlessness.

Part III

Big Brothers

15

Born in 1925

(1948)

No one knows whether this youth of ours is a youth. Any definition scatters it, revolts it, makes it laugh. We are on Radiguet's side, with nuances. We engage in a sustained refusal to be whatever isn't us—and to qualify this "we." However, let's be honest, we should not eliminate the part of this generation that gives itself over to parties, to dogmatisms. Questioning is not our common denominator. We have our indifferent elements, our submissive or our ambitious ones. Those whom maturity wins over. One would run out of breath trying to define what we are. Let's not suffocate.

Still a qualification is possible: we were fifteen in 1940. For a Czech, that meant clandestine action; for a German, *Gott mit uns*; for a French person, introversion. In any case, there is only a problem, at this moment, within the limits of Europe. Once again "European youth" is awake. The war and subsequent events have taught us that our own awareness must go hand in hand with historical consciousness: our only aesthetes are aggressive ones, and humanism has become a political attitude. Certain values have found themselves committed to battle, above all committed to the justification of that battle. Hence their swift degradation. We come out of the twentieth century's most concrete achievement, the war, in a state of monstrous poverty. We were twenty when the camps vomited into our laps those whom there had not been time or energy to digest. These hollow faces plague our reflections: in the camps Europe put its liberalism to death, killed three or four centuries of Greco-Latin tradition. The world is amazed. Secretly the shock spreads, and, when Gandhi's murder exposed the collapse of our *raison d'être* to a light made dazzling by our bitterness, we were twenty-three years old.

Thus we thought we were old. We are satisfied with a philosophy of the absurd: logically there is no beyond, and we love the easy cruelty of logic. This philosophy marks out our closed horizons, our ports without ships, our ships without moorings, a world where there are no more deserts to cross and no more virgin forests to ravish. We are chaste in our ventures. But this

philosophy nevertheless teaches us that since nothing has been given to us, everything remains to be done. The absurd negates itself; a door is only closed to someone who claims to open it. This door was broken down by the war, the Resistance, and then the war again in such a way that the twenty-three-year-old activists, if they are clear-sighted, know that they are ineffective. Action is cut off from its purpose, an enterprise devoid of ambition; but engagement and action are worthwhile in themselves. In parallel fashion, art abandons figure, representation drowns the represented, and Raphael bores us. The object undergoes the same process of breakdown as had the field of concrete actions and undertakings. Surrealist expression has made us used to works whose very meaning is given over to chance as the summit of human freedom. *L'amour fou* is so optimistic.

Even so, this freedom overwhelms us. "Innocence beyond repair," says Camus. It is not young. It is as old as war or, more precisely, as old as postwar periods. But its crushing strength is surprising. The other postwar period had the Russian Revolution, Freud, surrealism. The bonds of traditional academism were broken by the institution of economic, moral, and artistic forms that not only questioned ways of living, interpreting, or acting, but also directly provoked innovative work. Now, for our part, we have not laid waste what our predecessors held dear; those attachments have simply died out. Nietzsche makes us ashamed: Europe is not overthrowing its values but suffering its fate. We became intelligent just in time to see communism decline into orthodoxy. And existential philosophy gives us, perhaps for the first time, a humanism that is resolutely pessimistic. (Black) humor is the last resort by which we can affirm ourselves against the world, and even it is complicitous. From *Conquérants* to *The Plague*, revolt becomes anemic, it internalizes itself. Despite appearances, this is not a Renaissance, for we have not broken out of slavery and rejected a faith, we have merely been present at the death throes of liberalism and freedom. We are entering into (a) middle age.

The so-called civilization of progress has just completed its own negation. First, the monuments of order collapse. The alienation that lies at the origin of our republic in the repression practiced from Versailles was first underscored by anarchist attacks. It had already given rise to surrealist scandals and been the target of the Communist International. In 1944–45, many called the (French) democratic regime into question. The minor reforms that were made served as poor camouflage for its failure, and the present crisis of this regime is a matter of public opinion. Europe no longer knows how it should behave, and therefore cannot understand itself. In 1918 Germany alone knew how to grasp the meaning of its chaos, and nazism, the hard line of capitalism, germinated from the horror of this chaos. The Germans, incapable of creating their own freedom, were susceptible to a destiny (to a style). We failed to

interpret this instinct of theirs: despair underlies all totalitarian systems. And it is in Germany that the industrial tradition comes to fruition; the camps show us where the exploitation of humanity leads when taken to the limit. The history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had combined a certain liberalism in trade and speculative thought with a positivism that led to the disappearance of people into economics. Our generation lived in the slow undermining or the catastrophic breakup of both liberalism and positivism.

The second great movement, originating with Rimbaud, has also lost its truth. The interwar period had its crisis of language, which was a crisis of expression in the widest sense. Our generation has its own as well. There might seem to be little difference here, were it not that we make nothing of our crisis of language. *Lettrisme*¹ is mistaken, at any rate, in its claim to be pursuing the objectives of surrealist explosivity. Firstly because (Breton is right about this) there is no way to think of a beyond to surrealism. After surrealism, you have to do *something else*. Secondly because: is this really what we need? Today Jarry is stuck at *L'univers concentrationnaire*. Of course, he is attempting to develop its meaning fully, but he is also emptying it of meaning, if Jarry has created a scandal, and if that scandal is now no longer an issue. After the recent conflict, revolt is now cut off from its occasion and its source, cut off from the possible. This is certainly the most serious crisis in expression for some time: expression is no longer able to surpass its material, no longer knows how to assign a “beyond” to the event. The best novel of this period is a book devoid of dreams, *Les jours de notre mort*. There is no longer any delirium that can live up to our tidy violence. Chance and arbitrariness have entered our everyday life along with horror, and often it is no longer desire that produces surrealism, but remorse. One might even say that Lautréamont’s icy lyricism brought on the world of the SS: the poets of the interwar period, who sought to kill the poet by revealing the magic at the heart of the act or the object in themselves, seem to have rediscovered the old soothsayer’s privilege, perhaps too heavy, of foretelling the future and of calling forth being through their speech. The most concrete examples were Breton and Malraux, prophets. Speaking often takes on this power at the dawn and the twilight of civilizations.

A sequence has begun. Expression has not found its proper measure, since the century has already taken the measure of a new excess on the part of humanity, an excessive cruelty. An Inquisition without any theological pretext, this cruelty has been nakedly revealed, devoid of any justification, with a disturbing beauty. Now it lies behind us, and we do not know what is going to happen to us. What is new about this generation is its unconquerable appetite for the concrete. Poetry does not get much of an audience among us, the adventure of the *Nourritures terrestres* makes us

smile, Gide will be the Bibliothèque Verte² of our sons, while we find T.E. Lawrence more persuasive than Mallarmé because we prefer the object of discourse (we are ripe for the detective novel). A radical breach with our elders: the world, which they told us was at human disposition, hardens in its hostile thickness. We have lost the fundamental complacency of all earlier undertakings whatsoever. On Bikini the earth split in two; the earth gave off a mushroom of dense smoke, like a belch. We were the only ones to laugh, while the adults said, keeping an eye on the health of the guinea pigs: "Reason will end up being right." Gradually, we betray (but do I still have the right to use this collective pronoun?), we desert the party of humanity for the party of things (for the *parti pris des choses*).³ Rimbaud ("If I have any taste, it's only for earth and for stones"), Van Gogh, Braque, Ponge, T.E. Lawrence writing to Curtis, "If the world had belonged to me, I would have banished animal life from it," are so many permissions requested by "our common desire to exist in the manner of the in-itself."⁴ The triumphant revolt that founded our humanist civilization on the dispersal of medieval consciousness is transfigured into desertion. We are reenacting a transition in the opposite direction, and just as Roman representation reduces the solitude of humanity in the interests of its complicity with matter, so we begin to no longer give ourselves priority over a universe in which our face and our indifference are sketched out.

Man's dream has been exiled from the city of man. How distant seems the claim to be master and possessor of nature! The forest eats our dwellings, thinking animal substance briefly grabs the machine man, adults cry freedom in order to give themselves courage. But who among those born in 1925 would not rather have been born a tree?

Of course, it's time to come clean; I am speaking of a certain kind of youth, so-called intellectual youth. It is nothing new if "young persons" of the bourgeoisie feel themselves situated out of joint with the movement of the world. What is somewhat new is that the consciousness of what we are, and especially the consciousness of what we are not, has come upon us more and more decisively. This is because, at the time when we were young people of fifteen or sixteen with our own enigmas to explain or escape, history forced us to pay attention to its problems. Now, at our present age, the age at which these same youths are primarily concerned to return to their class alignments, history once more evokes our distaste for compromises with oneself. Our isolation is the product of our malaise, our desire to look clearly at our belonging to the century. And, since all truth is reversible, our malaise is the product of isolation. This false situation occurs under a thousand different forms. The temptation or the attempt to make a break is among the more valid of these. Adventure, setting aside all passion, still passes as a means of giving oneself a reason to live. Many run to the political parties. And so on.

In short, we are in a state of dispersal, with the decay of the speculative and a desire for the concrete as our common denominator, especially in the political sphere.

This dispersal occurs in all perspectives. In art, great painters are no longer those who possess skill, but those who have something to say, and who have skill to back them up. African art, Central Asian objects, and Roman frescoes prefer being and doing to technique. Picasso returns to his sources, and Klee, who could have been anything, chooses to be Klee. Heidegger, in philosophy, reconsiders all thought since Aristotle and observes that it has incessantly avoided the question of being: thus poetry presents itself as the means by which being reveals itself immediately. Hölderlin, or silence, crushes Valéry quite dead.

In thirty years we will have found a meaning for this empiricism, and reconstructed a civilization. But we will have lived in the interregnum.

We still have to make do with the provisional, to take threats of war into account, to think of ourselves without a future. For some this is easy, for many it is disturbing. Here individuals decide and consent only in their own good time. At least, among my class a young bourgeois is someone who, after a fairly general questioning of self and others, gives himself or herself answers in terms of "difference." We are tired of being obliged to represent a situation we did not create. We don't even have the hope anymore that what we stand for is a situation that remains to be created. They have killed our notion of humanity, it is said. Let's be consistent: we don't give a damn for tradition. And let's choose an extravagant personal adventure.

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A Podium without a Podium: Television according to J.-F.Lyotard (1978)

[The following is the text for a television program prepared by Lyotard as part of an access series entitled “Tribune Libre” on the French channel FR3 on March 27, 1978.¹ Responding to an invitation to appear as an intellectual, Lyotard employs a strict division between voice and appearance. Except for one moment, the sound track is not synchronized with the image of Lyotard’s mouth. After an initial voice-over without an image of Lyotard, the sound track is out of sync with the speaking mouth that appears to produce it but doesn’t. In the text, I have marked these instances as “voice-over,” “sound track out of sync,” and “synchronized sound track.”—Trans.]

J.C.Courdy: Good evening. As usual on Mondays, here is our intellectual, Jean-François Lyotard.

Jean-François Lyotard is professor of philosophy at the University of Vincennes, but a rather unusual professor.

In effect, he begins by observing himself in order to observe others. From 1950, he has broken with the ideology of the French Communist party in undertaking a critique of bureaucracy. For twelve years he participated in a group of intellectuals and workers who aimed at developing the revolutionary critique of society. Author of numerous works, he identifies a fraying of discourse, the exhaustion of sociological discourses, in his most recent book, *Rudiments païens*. In *Rudiments païens*, he observes that societies seem able to function independently of all political, economic, and ideological discourses. Tonight, Jean-François Lyotard has been brought before you to critique his own discourse and to ask himself questions concerning his presence among us on television this evening.

Jean-François Lyotard (voice-over): You are going to see him; you are going to hear him. You do not know who he is...he’s an intellectual, he has written several books that are attempts to philosophize. You have seen them, you

see them now, you do not recognize them... You didn't ask him to speak this evening. You think that he must have friends at FR3; if he has any, they are unknown to him. The truth is even simpler than that. The producer of "Tribune Libre" thought he should give intellectuals some space on this program.

(*Lyotard, sound track out of sync*) The questions you should ask Lyotard and the others, the questions that he perhaps asks himself, are these: Why is he allowed to speak in these conditions? What is expected of him...? If he were famous, his appearance would obviously be of benefit to the program. ...But he isn't famous. Does someone want to do him a favor by giving him a chance to become well-known? Certainly, and he thanks the program's producer for it.

Yet, can he make something known by speaking for a quarter of an hour one evening in front of a camera... maybe his face, take a good look... maybe also his name, but that's less likely... and what is least likely is that he will make known what he believes he has to say, since that has already taken him one or two thousand written pages and several years (he is not young), so that it should be impossible for him to say all that in fifteen minutes.

I bet that he won't tell you anything about what he does. He doesn't just write books, he is professor of philosophy at the University of Vincennes; hence he does philosophy. No one has ever been quite sure what that consists of.

When one does medicine or politics, when one is a toolmaker, train driver, shopkeeper, one does something that performs a service for others ... These are jobs; they have an obvious social utility; no one asks these professions to justify their existence—quite the contrary. People trust politicians, doctors, train drivers, because they know that these professionals know more...than the client or the user about what has to be done to make things work...in their own field.

Now, when one does philosophy, one asks oneself what it means to know that it works...and what it means to know what has to be done to make things work.

For example, what is a social, political, economic, or cultural body that works...and how do we know when it works? For example, does a body work when it doesn't make any noise, when there is no agitation, although this silence is perhaps that of oppression...? Does it work when everyone feels safe? But how can one know that security is the ideal...for a social body, rather than adventure, resourcefulness, or abnegation? And besides, how can we know what must be done to reach a goal like silence or security...?

What constitutes health does not seem any more obvious in medicine than in politics. Does health consist in not feeling one's body at all...? And that is fainting or even death...A human being always feels its body. So, on the basis of what kind or intensity of bodily sensations should a human be called sick and be prescribed treatment in order to cure him or her...?

Another example: When can you say that the work of a worker on an automatic lathe works? When it meets the productivity targets established by the technicians and controlled by chronometers?

But then, how do these technicians know what is good for the work and the worker?

They say that the finished product has to be sold, hence it must be competitive, it must be as cheap as possible, whence the productivity targets... But why? Can economic relations between people work well only if they produce and buy the greatest possible number of manufactured products...? And a man and a woman together, what does it mean for them, for each of them and for the two of them together...what does it mean to say that things are going well between them?

These are the kinds of questions the philosophers ask themselves, philosophers like the one you are looking at...

These are utterly mundane questions. All people ask questions of this kind someday, questions about their work, about the area they live in, about their family, about their love life.... Has Lyotard been put on the air for a quarter of an hour just to ask these questions? You really don't need to be a philosopher to ask them...But maybe he is expected to answer them. Is he supposed to make a declaration about what constitutes true work, true health, the true society, and the true couple, or at least a declaration of the truth according to him? Maybe he is supposed to give his opinion on these subjects after all...

(*Lyotard, synchronized sound track*) We TV watchers have the habit of listening to and looking at masses of people who come onto our screens to give us their opinions, but we distinguish, or at least we believe we can distinguish, between a simple opinion and true expertise...When a great surgeon comes to speak to us about a heart transplant, for example, we know very well that he knows what he is talking about and that he is competent to perform it. Well, when I say that we know very well, that's just a phrase... Suppose that someone does know that the surgeon knows what he is talking about...Were that not the case, he would not be a great surgeon. We don't claim to be able to judge for ourselves in this matter.

(*Lyotard, sound track out of sync*) Really, though, if we are being presented with a philosopher this evening, it is because someone knows that this fellow is going to do more than simply give us an opinion on the question that interests us. If he has been allowed to speak, it is because, basically, someone does know that he knows what he is talking about.

And as in the case of the surgeon, we are not the ones who can tell whether he knows what he is talking about. We have not studied enough. We cannot judge it.

Except that he ought to know that he is learned. In any case, if he has been asked to appear, it's certainly for that reason. And if he is learned, it is precisely because he can answer those questions, that is, what is fair work, what is a good society, what is a perfect couple, and so forth. This is, in effect, what he is expected to do. He is expected to be an authority on these matters...because if he is authorized to speak freely for a quarter of an hour to hundreds of thousands of his fellow citizens, it is because he has the authority to do it.

Now, when I said that a philosopher is someone who thinks about the common questions, he reflects particularly and principally on questions of authority. For example, when he asks how the person who determines working practices knows that what he decides is good...what does the philosopher do? He ponders the authority of bosses over matters of production. The same thing for health, the same thing for the couple, for the rest: he ponders the authority of the physician, of the psychological counselor, and so on...

And, obviously, when he is put in the position of being an authority, as is the case for Lyotard at this moment, he wonders about the authority he is asked to have, and he tells himself that you are in the process of believing that there is indeed someone somewhere who knows that he is competent, because this someone has allowed him to speak...

Except that he, because he is a philosopher, knows that this is not the case at all. He knows that this someone cannot know if he, Lyotard, is competent ...because that would be to say that this someone is himself competent to answer the questions that interest the philosopher—love, work, society, health, and so forth—and that he can thus knowingly judge Lyotard's competence, or that of someone else.

But how can one know that this someone, this second person, is himself competent? Of course, you are going to ask why there shouldn't be a knowledge and an authority on these everyday matters...There is indeed a knowledge and an authority, a recognized competence, in scientific and technical matters...they are the affair of specialists, very learned folks, and Lyotard himself, when he gives a course at Vincennes, when he writes books, does indeed know more than most of his students or his readers.

I believe he would grant us this last point, but he would have you note that it is one thing to know a question inside and out and another to answer it correctly, which is the essence of knowledge as such.

To admit that competence in scientific and technical matters is not illusory and that scientists, engineers, and technicians really are learned, although at times there is evidence to the contrary, does not prove that the same thing goes for all questions. One can, for example, provide a rigorous demonstration

that the just is not an object of knowledge and that there is no science of justice.²

One can show the same thing for what is beautiful, or for what is agreeable. Hence there is no true and certain competence and authority in these domains, domains that, however, have a great significance in everyday life. In these domains there are only opinions. And all these opinions have to be discussed...

This philosopher thus refuses to appear before your eyes and ears as an authority, as he is asked to do...And for the rest, if he has chosen this little mechanism of transmission by which you don't see the one who is speaking and you don't hear the one you see, he has done so in order to destroy the image of authority that inevitably comes to frame itself in your screen, every time it makes you see anything other than fictions, films, or plays...

By refusing to offer you this image, he refuses to provide a service. This service is the only one that has always been required of philosophers. Since they do not provide any service to society by virtue of their profession itself, because they lack competence and authority in their field (which, besides, is not even a field because it is in reality made up of the most mundane questions), they can at least be asked to make themselves useful by agreeing to appear learned, to incarnate the authority of knowledge in the eyes of those who do not possess it.

One can ask these philosophers to at least appear learned. But if they accept that, to what do they provide a service, to whom and to what do they provide a service...? Only to those who need to believe that there can be competence and authority in these matters where there isn't any.

For example, in matters of justice, in matters of beauty, of happiness, and perhaps even of truth...And does one have to believe in competence and authority in these matters if there isn't any?

Well, that's the big question...It's the need to believe in an authority, authority's need to be believed, its need to believe in itself...it's a very old affair, it's the affair of politicians or, rather, of political parties. Now this same question is raised by the slightest appearance on television. The presence on the screen of the least little philosopher, of the least little handyman, of the least little employee, of the least little variety show artist, devoid of authority as he may be, contributes and even suffices to give them an authority for a few moments...

And you believe that none of it will remain afterward? But the general idea will remain that there are always, in all domains, competent folks who are always those who decided to program what one sees or what one hears and who deserve to have authority.

If philosophers agree to help their fellow citizens to believe in authority in matters where there isn't any, to legitimate this authority, then they cease to

ponder in the sense in which I spoke of thinking, and they thereby cease to be philosophers.

They become what one calls intellectuals, that is, persons who legitimate a claimed competence...their own, but persons who above all legitimate the very idea that there ought to be competence in everything. And then they all fill the same role, even if some are Catholic and others free thinkers or Marxists, even if some are on the left and others on the right. For a long time, in the West, philosophers have been exposed to the temptation of the role of the intellectual, they have been tempted to turn themselves into the representatives of an authority. And there are not many, since Plato, over the past twenty-five hundred years, who have not succumbed to this temptation. It seems to me that Lyotard would like to belong to this minority; that's what he told me to tell you.

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Oikos

(1988)

The Dog

I want to begin here by saluting the mistress of us all in matters of ecology, Sascha, Dieter Beisel's dog.¹ She resides wherever Dieter Beisel is. She occupies a voice, an odor, a silhouette, a set of movements: such is the *oikos*. She takes no one to court to safeguard her property. She doesn't need a soil, a blood, or even an apartment; all she needs is to belong, *oikeion*.

The Humanism of War

The necessity of identifying an enemy is not, properly speaking, ecological; it has more to do with the political theology of a Carl Schmitt. It is curious that the need to identify an enemy makes itself felt at the very moment when there is no longer an enemy, in the absence of an alternative to the system. This enemy is identified as the death of *Menschheit* [mankind], and thus the war has to be begun all over again, which is to say we open a trial for war crimes.² Thus, a kind of prophetic or pathetic psychosis develops and—as Holger Strohm put it admirably yesterday—as always in psychosis you have to escape from *Verdrängung* [repression], for *Verdrängung* is only neurosis. Therefore you have to attack, organize, defend yourself, and it is on the basis of this mechanism that the very concept of *Grenze* [border] can appear. That said, this is not a diagnosis. *Das ist keine Diagnose*. Only a feeling. *Nur ein Gefühl*. Obviously, technoscientific development is accompanied by dangers. I remember texts written in France in 1840: prophetic, pathetic texts on the pollution caused by the railroads. It can be argued that these dangers proceed from the development of capitalism, and I think that what is generally called “capitalism” greatly exceeds “capitalism” proper. Capitalism is only a socioeconomic name for a process of development of which no one is master. This threat is not new, it is only stronger than it used to be because the system

is more improbable, more complex, and more difficult to control. But I hear it said that people want to live in the humanism of war, to live one's life, as Strohm put it, to live without fear, to eliminate fear, that is, to obtain security. I think the enemy is not outside, but within, peculiar to and for each of us. And I would say that in the humanism of war there occurs a projection in the psychoanalytic sense, a projection of this enemy and this interior distress onto an external other, hence an exteriorization or an externalization.

When people say that the media lie, this is not news. The question is to know what it means to say this and how it is that the media lie. Their lies always work in the same direction, so as to produce a feeling of safety, sometimes by recourse to paradox. They work for safety. But the ecologism of war also wants safety, because it wants to eliminate fear. If you ask me, this is probably the reason for its success, particularly in the Federal Republic of Germany.

And yet the *oikos* in the Greek tradition (*domus* in the Latin tradition), is not, and I insist on this, the place of safety. The *oikos* is above all the place of tragedy. I recall that one of the conditions of the tragic enumerated by Aristotle is precisely the domestic condition: relationships are tragic because they occur in the family; it is within the family that incest, patricide, and matricide occur. Tragedy is not possible outside this ecologic or ecotragic framework.

The Grenzen and the Question of the System

It is obvious that recourse to the opposition between Man and nature (*Mensch/Natur*) and of course the simultaneous placing of this opposition in a dialectic, particularly in Marx (more precisely in the young Marx whose texts of 1843 and 1844 are quite clear on this point) are habits of speculative thought, notably Hegel's. This opposition of the inside to the outside belongs to a very specific philosophical tradition, namely, that of the metaphysics of the subject: a thinking, perceiving, or speaking subject can carry out its operations only by objectifying what it thinks, perceives, and speaks of in the form of a *Gegenstand* [an objectivity], which comes down to a process of exteriorization or even alienation in the Hegelian sense.

But there is another metaphysical tradition where this opposition is not relevant. It is a philosophy of substance that distinguishes between potential and action, a tradition that originates in the West with Aristotle's stress on energy, on the move to action, on putting into action *energeia*, which is also called "labor" and "technè." This philosophy of substance requires a kind of finality (I set this problem aside), but the opposition between outside and inside is not relevant to it; rather, the opposition between matter and form is what counts.

Now (and now I am going to get to *Systemtheorie*), the thought of Leibniz is an extreme condition of this philosophy, in which the question of outside and inside, that is, of the border between the outside and the inside, is not relevant. Leibniz's thought is thus the extreme state of the metaphysical tradition of the West, and his monadology pushes the suppression of the *Grenze* [border] a very long way because for him, precisely, there is no difference or border between matter or object and thought or subject. There are only different degrees of memory. Consciousness remains matter with a great deal of memory. And at that point, one has already broached the problem of cybernetics. Matter is consciousness with very little memory. That implies that every entity (*alles Seiende*, if you prefer), may be and ought to be thought in mechanical, dynamic, or economic terms, hence in terms of relationships of force and efficiency. A monad or a weak entity is one that does not have much memory and that reacts simply to information, namely, to shock, insofar as it can record it. On the other hand, a very rich monad has the wherewithal to process the information at length before reacting: it can take its time, which is what we are doing now. According to Leibniz, there is thus only a difference in complexity between monads, a difference in storage capacity and the capacity to make use of information.

What Niklas Luhmann calls the “reduction of complexity” is not the suppression of complexity at all, it is what might be called feasibility, the capacity to make use of a complex memory. The complexities of which he speaks are complexities of use and execution, since the memory of complex systems is a complex memory. With contemporary technoscientific systems, which have the capacity to address mental operations (even if only very simple ones), humanity (or at least the part of humanity that is called “developed”) may be and should be thought of as a rich monad endowed with a more and more complex memory. This memory ought to make the information it stores useful. We should carefully analyze the effects of this situation on what we call “memory,” on intelligence, on education, on the economy, and of course also on discourse and its nature. In any case, it is certain that the single principle of optimal performance predominates everywhere, optimal performance that consists in contributing to the development of this great monad in which humanity is caught.

This monadology was still a philosophical system that presupposed a finality, particularly that of a benevolent God ensuring the harmony of the whole. However, systems theory is not a philosophical system but a description of reality, “a so-called reality” [“die sogenannte Wirklichkeit”] that has become entirely describable in terms of general physics, which stretches from astrophysics to particle physics (electronics, information technology, and cybernetics are only aspects of this general physics) and of course also in

economic terms. In this description, the alive or the human appear as particular cases, very interesting cases of complex material systems. This means that, from this perspective, conflict (and ultimately war) does not arise between human and nature; rather, the struggle is between more developed systems and something else that is necessarily less developed and that the physicists know as entropy, the second principle of thermodynamics. The section of humanity that is not developed can be considered as entropic in relation to the system (and this is already the way it is thought of, particularly by the central banks of the developed countries).

From the point of view of development (which is not mine, but which I can espouse for a moment), the Third World is nothing but a source of entropy for the *autopoiesis* of the great monad. And either it will join the system or it will have to be excluded from it. I'm very pessimistic on this point, because I'm afraid that in the race for survival (after the explosion of the sun) the major part of the Third World is already lost.

Oikeion and Entropy

It is not the human and the inhuman that are at odds, for no clear-cut border exists between these two terms; the conflict or challenge is between negative entropy, negentropy, or development on the one hand and entropy on the other. On this basis the general hypothesis should be made that humans (I do not say "men," [*les hommes*], I say "humans" [*les humains*], to indicate complex systems capable of autoreferentiality) are only the bearers of and the witnesses to a process of negative entropy that can be located at the planetary level: a tiny little planet, a tiny little earth, in a tiny little system, around a little star, the sun, in a little galaxy. But this process takes no interest in humans; it is only interested in itself. Perhaps this negentropic self-development is related to Luhmann's *autopoiesis*.

If one tries to reformulate *oikeion* in terms of *Systemtheorie*, is it the same thing as entropy? Probably it is possible to qualify what I mean by *oikeion* as an entropy, but this is only an external qualification, because it presupposes precisely the general assumption that the system functions according to the law of what I call general physics. If we preserve this metaphor derived from the vocabulary of physics (telling whether it is a metaphor or not is another problem), I have to make a neat distinction between ecology and economy. Probably this difference matches up exactly with the Kantian difference between determinant judgment and reflective judgment. Economy is the *nomos*, that is, the regulation of the circulation of forces and information or messages (I know that these are not the same, but let me put it that way for the moment), it is a question of regulation, that is to say, of the ability to preserve, conserve, store, and use the past, past events, the effects that past

events have had on the system or the apparatus, and to use this information in order to adjust for efficiency, optimal performance.

What do we mean by “function”? It is a metaphor from biology or mathematics that designates a rule for operating, nothing more. The economy functions precisely insofar as people and instances observe rules that are something like what is called a “memory” in cybernetics, a sort of set of rules. Engineers distinguish between a living memory and a dead memory: the dead memory consists of stocks of ways of dealing with new information and the living memory is the memory useful for programming certain reactions. That is probably the difference between code and program. I am sure that it is possible to describe current society in terms of a program and I can understand this approach; probably it is also possible to understand the function of an individual in these terms (at least hypothetically) because if you consider that what we have to understand is the mode of functioning, you have already assumed the hypothesis of functions. The main point is that something is understood in terms of function.

What I mean by *oikeion* or my version of ecology precisely does not fall under the rule of that sort of memory. That is to say that it is impossible to describe it in terms of function. You can look at it as an entropy and certainly, functionally speaking, the unconscious (to use Freudian terminology) is the dysfunctional entity par excellence. It provokes only trouble, that is, paradoxes and even silences or noises, which are the same thing. It would be interesting to know where this sort of dysfunction or malfunction comes from. Is it possible to reduce it, to transform either an individual or collective apparatus into a totally transparent entity without any sources of dysfunction except the sources Luhmann assumed, that is to say, the sources coming from the function itself without any otherness? My *oikeion* is an otherness that is not an *Umwelt* at all, but this otherness in the core of the apparatus. We have to imagine an apparatus inhabited by a sort of guest, not a ghost, but an ignored guest who produces some trouble, and people look to the outside in order to find out the external cause of the trouble. But probably the cause is not outside, that is my idea. So we can call it entropy, but probably the more interesting thing is to try to touch it, not approach it, because it is not an object available for a cognitive touch. For example, psychoanalysis is not a science at all, not a knowledge, properly speaking; it is a different practice, a practice of something like writing. That is the reason why I connect, I have connected, and I will connect this topic of the *oikeion* with writing that is not a knowledge at all and that has, properly speaking, no function. Afterward, yes, when the work is written, you can put this work into an existing function, for example, a cultural function. Works are doomed to that, but while we are writing, we have no idea about the function, if we are serious.

As for the negentropic process, it is only a matter of a hypothesis; the scientists are very clear on this point if you ask them about it. Hence, one makes the hypothesis that in this corner of the universe, there is a negentropic process, because it is evident that something happens that contradicts the second principle of thermodynamics. Why, how? We know how, but no one knows why. Let's make a scientific hypothesis that allows us to understand many things. Philosophically, one can say that the general physics of this developing system is the realization of traditional metaphysics and more specifically of Leibniz's last great metaphysics of substance. And this is "reality." That means that for the philosopher, what we call reality is the realization of the monadology, which means that metaphysics has come to an end because physics has realized it. We are thus in a universe—*universe* is too big a word; it's time to say *Umwelt*—we are in an *Umwelt* that is the realization of metaphysics as a general physics under the name of cybernetics. This, I believe, is the heart of Jürgen Habermas's critique of Niklas Luhmann, when he calls Luhmann's system theory an ideology. But I would like to ask whether the philosophy of the subject that Habermas opposes to Luhmann, a philosophy that is explicitly counterfactual, but that nonetheless remains a philosophy of the subject, of a subject that has to constitute itself collectively as consensus, is not itself an ideology. My questions are, if you prefer, the following: In the framework of development, does not all philosophy transform itself into ideology? Is it not simply useless? There is a theme particularly dear to the French (at least to those who are called "the French"; I don't know who "the French" are), the theme of an ending, of a limit to philosophy. In the *Umwelt* I am describing, all politics is certainly nothing other than a program of decisions to encourage development. All politics is only (I say "only" because I have a revolutionary past and hence a certain nostalgia) a program of administrative decision making, of managing the system.

Ecology as Discourse of the Secluded

In conclusion, I would like to interrogate the word *ecology*, a word made up of *oikos* and *logos*. Do we speak of the *oikos*, or is it the *oikos* that speaks? Do we describe the *oikos* as an object, or is it rather that we listen to it, to what it wants? In Greek, there is a very clear opposition between *oikeion* and *politikon*. The *Oikeion* is the women, whose sex is *oikeion*; the children, whose generation is also *oikeion*; the servants, everything that can be called "domesticity" in the old Latin sense, that which is in the *domus*, like the dogs, for example. In the final analysis, *oikeion* is everything that is not *öffentliche* [public]. And the opposition between the *oikeion* and the *politikon* exactly matches up to that between the secluded (the *Zurückgezogene* or the

Abgeschiedene)³ on one side and the *Öffentliche* on the other. The political is the public sphere, while the *oikeion* is the space we call “private,” an awful word that I’m trying to avoid in saying “secluded.” It is the shadowy space of all that escapes the light of public speech, and it is precisely in this darkness that tragedy occurs.

Answers to Questions

The Body as Destiny: Birth, Death, Sexual Difference

The assumption that the *oikos* is located inside us is based on a view according to which the body is not only an object but also an entity carrying the traces of a destiny that implies narratives and even tragedy, for it has a certain relationship with time that is definitively different from the computed, stored, differentiated time, time as money, that I sketched out in our first session. At that point I introduced the term *destiny*, and I will try to come back to that later on.

This destiny inscribed in the human body (which is its proper *oikos*) is connected to a double ontological fact: I was born and I have to die—a past and a future, and it is impossible to set the one off against the other. I have to be born, I am to die; that is a problem. And when we reflect on that for a moment we are conscious that this time is precisely not reversible. And the second aspect of this same ontological fact is my being sexed as a male or female, and I have no choice about it. It is impossible to have any thought about the human body that does not take into account this double fact of death and birth on the one hand and sexual difference on the other. My idea is that sexual difference is something like an ontological difference.

Being Dropped

In both schedules—I mean those of life and death and of female and male—we are dropped into a situation whose meaning is unknown to us, at least in the beginning. We have to learn something that has already happened. That is the sense I would like to give to the term “to be dropped.” We have to learn something that is already here. We have to learn what it is to live, what it is to die, what it is to be a female or male. We have to answer these questions, and as we are growing up, we come up against a lot of answers from a lot of institutions. By “institutions” here I mean both little narratives, told around us and about us, by our family, relatives, friends, schoolmates, and colleagues, and I also mean norms and formal institutions, in principle operating in our society to provide answers to the questions of what it is like to be male or female, to be alive, to go to our deaths, and so on. We also have imaginary

representations—literature, movies, and so on—in order to answer these questions.

Questions from Children and Philosophers

What is relevant here is the fact that we are questioned before we are able to answer, that is to say, that questions come too soon. We are unprepared for them. Childish questions like Where was I before I was born? That is a good question, a very good question, a philosophical question. Where will I be after death? Why don't females, and first of all my mother, have a penis? And why do males have one? How is it possible for females to give birth to children? What is giving birth? And what is the role or function of fathers with regard to mothers and children? I think that all these questions are properly philosophical questions and in general we have no proper answer to them, not only in childhood, but also now.

The Struggle with the Already-found Language

Such questions are uttered only when we are able to speak. At that moment we can formulate questions as questions requiring answers, and answers, too, if we can formulate them. But with respect to language we are late, too. We have to enter language as if it were a world already constituted. Language is already speaking before I am able to speak. Words (or phrases, if you prefer) do say something beforehand, and we are able to use them—so that we are in a kind of double bind relationship with words. We need them in order to express and formulate our questions. The questions we may formulate with words are only questions allowed by words so that we have to fight them, to fight words, to fight phrases to make them more appropriate to our questions. But what is the appropriateness, the property of a word? When can we say that this word, this phrase, is proper for expressing my question?

Supplementarity and the Secluded

We need something like a way to express that *oikeion*, which is not an *Umwelt* at all, but a relation with something that is inscribed at the origin in all minds, souls, or psychic apparatuses. We are not prepared (and that is our difference from computers, the fact that we are unarmed or undefended, in being born), not prepared to speak, not prepared to control the *Umwelt*, and so on. In this sense we are born too soon. But at the same time we are born too late because a lot of meanings or stories have already been narrated about our birth. In this sense we are already the object of a lot of meanings, and we have to conquer these meanings afterward and probably we try all

our lives to understand what was expected of us. It is too late, because these expectations are already part of our lives. That is to say that this belatedness [*Nachträglichkeit*] (this paradoxical relationship with time) probably characterizes what I called the *Abgeschiedene*. Any communication strives to resolve this paradoxical situation with regard to time. In this respect I do not agree at all with the parallel that Ferdinand Schmidt has drawn between our minds and computers precisely because no computer has ever been a child.

Coming Too Late and Supplementary

Before we have access to language, questions about death, life, and sexual difference have already been asked in the child's psyche. And please conceive psyche as both body and mind. These questions are not asked as questions, but are present to the psyche as diseases. We are fearful or at least threatened and the psyche must overcome the distresses and diseases linked to those questions.

Repression

Thus, the psychic apparatus (the division between body and mind is introduced with language and there has been a phase that precedes language) is led to build defenses against feelings as tacit questions. Those defenses may be as much physical as mental, the difference between body and mind having not yet been made, that is to say, somatic conversions, dreams, phobias, aggressiveness, manias, and so on. All of them can be viewed as effects of defense against anxiety. Repression [*Verdrängung*].

The Character Filter as Effect of the Repressive Process

These effects of defense must be conceived as primary answers to the questions I mentioned. And with the ways according to which we *verdrängen*, we repress anxieties and diseases, the shape of our character, both physical and mental, is developing. This shape is like a filter that later on filters situations, issues, and answers we may need. And presumably this shape as a filter is the root or the source of the so-called ideologies and devotions, *Berufe*. Certainly, in this filter is rooted what I initially called "destiny."

Writing as Anamnesis and Working through

Insofar as we are concerned with the task of thinking or writing, we have to fight the heritage of meaning implicit in words and phrases in order to make words and phrases appropriate to what we need to say. We also have to

deconstruct, to dismember, to criticize the defenses that are already built into our psyche, impeding us from hearing original fundamental questions. I imagine the filter also as a sound filter, as a sort of noise that allows us not to hear the real questions. The task—I call it “anamnesis”—involves the *Durcharbeitung*, that is to say, a working through the filter or the screen preserving our quietness.

Childlike Fear of the Given

Thus, the task implies that one admits a large element of childish anxiety that is a result of the fact that something is given, has been given, and will have been given to us before we are able to receive it, before we are in the condition of agreeing to it, before becoming aware of it. And this something is merely that there is something, more than nothing. This “there is” is necessarily linked with questions of birth, death, and sexual difference. I think that when Freud speaks of a “psychic economy,” he would have done better to speak of a “psychic ecology,” for the term “libidinal economy” (in the Freudian sense, not mine),⁴ presupposes that something necessarily escapes publicity, *Öffentlichkeit*, that something resists openness and hence communication. Call it what you will, the “unconscious” or whatever. One can only describe this something as contradiction, tension (physical operation), *Verdrängung* [repression], *Verschiebung* [deferral] (physical operations), *Verstellung* [displacement] (physical operation), and in general *Entstellung* [distortion]. All these concepts are terms of transport, of the modification of forces, masses, and volumes. Precisely the order of passion or pathos, and this pathos is described in physical terms.

Today, economics belongs to *Öffentlichkeit*, what we call *Wirtschaft* [the economy] is precisely part of the public sphere. I would even say that the economy is the very substance of *Öffentlichkeit*, because it is simply the regulation, the *nomos*, of goods, values, and services. When *oikos* gives rise to *oikonomikos* or *oikonomikon*, a complex transformation of the word *oikos* occurs. If “economic” means *öffentlich*, it implies that the *oikos* itself has slipped away elsewhere. It would certainly be wrong to believe that it has disappeared. I mean simply that, for me, “ecology” means the discourse of the secluded, of the thing that has not become public, that has not become communicational, that has not become systemic, and that can never become any of these things. This presupposes that there is a relation of language with the *logos*, which is not centered on optimal performance and which is not obsessed by it, but which is preoccupied, in the full sense of “pre-occupied” with listening to and seeking for what is secluded, *oikeion*. This discourse is called “literature,” “art,” or “writing” in general.

Writing and Presence

I am describing a situation of distress, of suffering that is at the same time the mere condition of thinking and writing. And especially when we question the property of words, it is obvious that the answer to the question of what is proper in the realm of words lies in our ability to pay attention to a feeling, the feeling that the question we try to ask is of this or that kind. This feeling is what leads us in search of the proper word or the proper phrase, but feeling is not a phrase, it is only the sketch of possible phrases. It implies uncertainty about meaning, as if meaning were present before being present. That is to say, I am obliged to admit a sort of presence different from the explicit linguistic and communicable present.

Many Bodies

There are a lot of “bodies” that form the subject matter of various sciences or practices. The body can be dealt with under different rubrics: growing up and coming of age, *Gesundheit* [health], developing fitness (sports), cultivating intensity (eroticism, using drugs, etc.), exploring resistance and flexibility (life in space, underwater, underground, in freezing conditions), challenging artificial conditions (surgery, prosthesis).

Thus nobody can be said to be the owner of this body as a whole. Bodies are shared according to various rubrics among various claims and practices.

Preparation of Bodies for Emigration into Space

In my mind, the reason for the number of experiments challenging the human body lies in the necessity for the human body to be made either adaptable to or commutable with another body, another device, more adaptable to extraterrestrial conditions, and it seems to me that this horizon has to be thought in the general perspective of technoscientific development, insofar as this development is aimed at the emigration of humankind from the earth. That is the general perspective of development, negentropy, and the complexification at work in this part of the cosmos. And in order to achieve emigration from the earth, it is necessary to multiply the knowledge we have of the abilities of the human body. It is certainly not a question of making this body happier or more comfortable, but of making this body capable of survival in conditions to which it is not adapted.

Survival after the Explosion of the Sun—Creativity and Childhood

I agree with the idea that the atom bomb makes war impossible, and that the ideal of tension is a sort of trick of reason. Under the atomic umbrella,

something else is possible, namely, war, which is interesting. I think that in Schmidt's perspective, the only stake (in an evolutionary prognosis) is not the explosion of a bomb, but the explosion of the sun. The sun is due to explode quite soon, in four and a half billion years, which is not very long. And probably genetic manipulation and the development of electronics are ways of challenging this catastrophe; that is to say, ways to permit what will be called humankind at that time (probably just meaning computers, very intelligent computers) to be saved and to emigrate from this dead cosmological system. I have the idea that under these conditions so-called evolution or development will have erased the question of birth, the question of childhood, the question of a certain anxiety concerning the internal rather than the external situation. In this case we have to take into account that the relation that we can have with this internal *Fremde* [stranger], this *unheimliche Heimliche* [uncanny familiarity], is the source of every invention, creation, and writing—even in science, let me add, even in science. That is the big difference between an everyday scientist and somebody like Einstein. Unquestionably, Einstein has been a child and has remained a child, and we have to be children if we are to be capable of the most minimal creative activity. If we are sent to space after the explosion of the sun (I don't even know if it will be us), if something is sent to space without this extraordinary complexity that is precisely the paradox of childhood, I am afraid that this complexity is not complex enough. In this case, we could call this by the terrible name of mere survival, which is not very interesting. I am not interested in surviving, not interested at all.

I am interested in remaining a child.

18

The General Line (for Gilles Deleuze) (1990)

“Since my earliest youth, I have believed that every person in this world has his *no man’s land*, where he is his own master. There is the existence that is apparent, and then there is the other existence, unknown to everyone else, that belongs to us without reserve. That is not to say that the one is moral and the other not, or that the one is permissible and the other forbidden. Simply that each person, from time to time, escapes all control, lives in freedom and mystery, alone or with someone else, for an hour a day, or one evening a week, or one day a month. And this secret and free existence continues from one evening or one day to another, and the hours continue to go on, one after another.

“Such hours add something to one’s visible existence. Unless they have a significance of their own. They can be joy, necessity, or habit, in any case they serve to keep a *general line*. Anyone who has not made use of this right, or has been deprived of it by circumstances, will discover one day with surprise that he has never met himself. One cannot think about that without melancholy.”

The right to this *no man’s land* is the most important human right.

The narrator of *Roseau révolté*¹ knows this, and adds: “Let it be noted in passing that the Inquisition or the totalitarian State cannot admit of this second existence that escapes their control.” Orwell in *1984* spoke of the resistance of a man to the annihilation of his second existence by the powers that be.

Humanity is only human when all individuals have this “country without man” for themselves, this *no man’s land*. They are not necessarily solitary there. “Alone or with someone,” all persons can “meet themselves” there. There is room for many people in this second life—me, you, the other.

On the other hand, “it must not be thought that it is a celebration, and that everything else is the everyday. The border does not lie there, it lies between life as such and the secret existence,” specifies the same voice. Nor is

it exactly a matter of the right to secrecy. The right to secrecy allows you on occasion to keep quiet about something you know. But the “secret existence” is “free,” because you don’t have any idea what you should say, were you to speak of it. You give over your free time to this “secret existence” because you have a need to go on not knowing. This is how you get the chance to encounter what you are ignorant of. Meanwhile, you wait for it. And you can even try to make it come to you. You can read, drink, love, make music, give yourself over to the ritual of minor obsessions, write. But all these means of provoking the encounter are also part of the mysterious region. They keep the secret and there is no way to be sure that they will work.

The region is secret because it is set apart. The right to this second existence is the right to remain separate, not to be exposed, not to have to answer to others. They used to call this keeping oneself to oneself. (But we don’t quite know what the self is. Keeping oneself to one’s something else.) This right should be accorded to everyone and be respected.

This is not oneself, it is something one encounters. It is certainly *no man* because there is no need for such moments in order to encounter *man*. One’s self is only there to protect *no man* and to keep guard around one’s *land*.

It does not mean that one is irresponsible because one does not have to answer to others for what happens in this secret region. All that this means is that the secret life does not happen by means of questions and answers. It is not something to be argued for.

Nina Berberova has her narrator say that these moments “serve to guard the *general line*.” The “general line” is not the line of general life, of life “as such.” However, this second existence treats “apparent existence” gently. It suspends it a little, it lodges itself momentarily in apparent existence and divides it, but one is not aware of it. The secret life does not really harm apparent existence, it opens small parentheses in it.

It is when life in general seeks to grab hold of the secret life that things go awry. Then the human right to separateness, which governs all overtly declared rights, is violated. It doesn’t take a totalitarian power, a defamatory rumor, expulsion, imprisonment, torture, starvation, enforced unemployment, or homelessness, censorship, occupation, deportation, segregation, or hostage taking in order for the right to separateness to be violated.

Of course, these are powerful methods by which to intimidate the forces that protect our second existence. They are direct, evident, and infallible ways of weakening it, making the second life impossible, invading it, annexing it to general life. There’s no doubt that the masters of general life, whoever they may be, are haunted by the suspicion that something escapes them, that there is something that can conspire against them. They want the entire soul, and they want it to surrender unconditionally to them.

There is also a less obvious method, which works with less glaringly evident violence to insinuate itself into the white or gray area in which man separates himself from men and feels his way according to his own general line. This process of insinuation does not come across as at all terroristic. The appeal to human rights, to publicly declared rights, can easily legitimate and cover it. Express yourself freely. Have the courage of your convictions, your opinions; communicate them, enrich the community, enrich yourself, act, enter into dialogue. Only good can come from the use of your rights provided you respect those of others. Mingle, everything is possible within the limits fixed by law or convention. And what is more, this rule can itself be revised.

I am speaking of liberal democracies, of “advanced” societies in which human rights are granted, respected as much as possible, in any case always appealed to and defended, and gradually extended to those who are called, in North America, minorities. These commandments of liberal democracy are good. They allow Amnesty International to exist, they even demand that it should exist. They allow me, on occasion, to publish these minor reflections without difficulty. Anyone who does not agree with them can always discuss them.

This does not, however, stop the repeated invitation to exercise rights and to make sure that they are respected from becoming so pressing as to be oppressive. A small rise in pressure, and that will be it for our hours of secrecy. Each person will be seized by others, by responsibilities, caught up in defending the proper enjoyment of his or her rights in general life, diverted from his or her guard over the “general line” that belongs to him or her.

This is a kind of proof that exercising one’s rights and making sure that they are respected can come to be exacted as a duty, as infallible a proof as any that a totalitarian order can supply. Infallible proof of the ruin of keeping oneself to oneself. Why did you not do this or say that?—you had the right to!

Bergson said that no one is forced to write a book. The activity of writing books belongs to the existence in which each person “escapes all control,” including his own. Writing is one of the necessarily hazardous means at one’s disposal for bringing about an encounter. One writes because one does not know what one has to say, to try to find out what it is. But today’s slogan is *Publish or perish!* If you are not public, you disappear; if you are not exposed as much as possible, you do not exist. Your *no man’s land* is only interesting when it is expressed and communicated. Silence is subjected to extreme pressure to give birth to its expression.

Does this pressure only affect writers, “intellectuals”? Not at all. Everyone has the same duty to exercise the right to be informed and to be heard. Everyone must be able to (exercise the right to) bear witness. The institutions see to it that we are all positioned on the threshold of ourselves, turned

outward, people of goodwill, ready to hear and to speak, to discuss, to protest, to explain ourselves. Thanks to surveys, interviews, opinion polls, roundtables, “series,” “dossiers,” we see ourselves in the media as humans occupied with fulfilling the duty of making rights prevail.

We are told again: no problem, everything is possible. There is legislation governing your case. If there isn’t, then we will legislate for it, you will be authorized. We are even going to help you to have recourse to the law. All of which is good. Who would dare to complain about it? Certainly not those who are deprived of access to the law. This pressure makes general life more just and more attentive.

However, all of this does not take place without a certain “melancholy.” It is true that we owe it to others to respect their rights and that they owe us the same. And that we all owe it to ourselves to be respected absolutely. But in this self there is an other, this or that thing whose company we keep or seek to keep during our secret hours. This other exercises an absolute right over the self, a right that has never been the object of any contract and that knows nothing of reciprocity. It is completely other to other people. It demands our time and our space in secret, without giving us anything in return, not even the knowledge of what it is or of what we are. We have no rights over it, no recourse against it, and no guarantees of safety.

Now, completely occupied with the legitimacy of exchanges with others in the community, we are inclined to neglect our duty to listen to this other; we are inclined to negate the second existence it requires of us. And thus we will become perfect ciphers, switching between public and private rights without remainder.

After that, in what terms would we still be respectable? We only deserve rights and respect for law because something in us exceeds all acknowledged law. The only ultimate significance of the law is to protect what lies beyond or beside it. What do we know of poverty, of sin, of the unconscious, of suffering, of shame, or indeed of inspiration, energy, passion, grace, and talent?

If we do not preserve the inhuman region where we can encounter this or that something, that which completely escapes the exercise of rights, we do not deserve the rights granted to us. What use is the right to freedom of expression if we have nothing to say but what has already been said? And how can we have any chance of finding a way to say what we don’t know how to say if we don’t pay attention to the silence of the other inside us? This silence stands as an exception to the reciprocity that characterizes rights, but it is its legitimization. We should indeed accord an absolute right to this “second existence” because it is what provides the right to have rights. Yet since it has nothing to do with rights, it will always have to make do with an amnesty.

19

The Wall, the Gulf, and the Sun: A Fable

(1990)

1

I intended to take advantage of the opportunity provided by this talk to take a bearing on the current historical conjuncture.¹ That's what I used to do in the fifties and sixties as a militant member of the critical theory and practice institute named Socialism or Barbarism whenever it was my turn to undertake the risky exercise we called situation analysis [*analyse de la situation*]. After having selected the events that we considered to have prominent significance in the contemporary historical context, we based our analysis on them with a view to formulating an accurate picture of the world.

While the purpose of this exercise was, of course, to gain as correct an understanding of "reality" as possible, it was also concerned with developing appropriate practical interventions within the complex and ever changing network of forces making up the historical situation. Thus, theoretical analysis was closely related to potential praxis. Indeed, besides the task of faithfully representing the world conjuncture, the question What could be done in such a situation? also had to be addressed. "What could be done" meant, more specifically, how could we help exploited and alienated peoples to emancipate themselves from exploitation and alienation, and what kind of practice would enable us to realize this goal, here and now?

To begin by recalling what "situation analysis" was for me in those days is not a matter of nostalgia. It helps me to realize just how different the circumstances for "situation analysis," and the expectations we can have of it, are today. Unlike a critical practice institute, we are of course not required to outline the direction of interventions. The only interventions we may envisage take form in the publication of papers and collections. This is not to say that it's a small matter to intervene in this manner. It is something else. And change doesn't come from the way a critical group is named. Rather, the difference emerges from a change that does effectively affect the historical situation and subsequently the state of criticism itself.

Briefly and generally speaking, let us say that militant praxis, in our countries at least, has become defensive praxis. We are constantly having to assert the rights of minorities, women, children, homosexuals, the environment, animals, citizens, culture and education, the South, the Third World, and the poor. We have to sign petitions, write papers, organize conferences, join committees, take part in polls, and publish books. In doing so, we assume the regular responsibilities attached to the position of intellectuals. I say "regular" because these practices are permitted and even encouraged by the law, or, at least, by the implicit or formal rules of our positions. Western society not only allows us to participate in these practices, in fact it requires us to take part in them; it needs the specific contributions that we are able to provide for the development of the system as a whole.

In these conditions, we may keep alive the feeling that we continue to fight for emancipation. And it is true. Nevertheless, there are signs that the nature of the struggle has changed. The price to pay for taking up the struggle—I mean the quantity of energy and time that must be spent in order to actualize critical practices—has been reduced. This reduction clearly indicates that our strategy has changed from an offensive one, as it formerly was, to a defensive one. According to Clausewitz, the amount of time and energy required for an offensive strategy to offset an adversary power is seven times greater than that needed for a defensive strategy. By moving from an offensive to a defensive strategy, we could save 86 percent of the energy previously devoted to the task of emancipation and still get the same effect!

We know in fact, however, that the effect can't be the same. Emancipation is no longer the task of gaining and imposing liberty from outside. It no longer represents an ideal alternative that can be opposed to reality. Rather, emancipation is taken as one goal among many pursued by the system, an ideal that the system itself endeavors to actualize in most of the areas it covers, such as work, taxes, marketplace, family, sex, race, school, culture, communication. Of course, emancipation is not always successful in each area; it is confronted with obstacles, both internal and external, that resist it. All the same, such efforts of resistance encourage the system to become more complex and open and promote spontaneous undertakings. That is tangible emancipation. Programs that improve what already exists are inscribed in its very mode of functioning, including venture programs that allow for greater complexity and more flexible institutions to be introduced into the system's network.

I know that the idyllic picture I am painting is as trivial as political discourses, commercial messages, and administrative policy documents may be and are. It is the critic's job to detect and denounce all of the cases in which the system fails to improve the process toward emancipation. I am

merely suggesting that the critic's position now presupposes that the system itself is understood by criticism as being put in charge of promoting emancipation and that critiques, whatever forms they may take, are needed by the system for improving its efficiency in the direction of emancipation. I would say that criticism contributes to changing differends, if there are still any, into litigations.

2

Thereby, the situation might inspire observers and commentators with the feeling that the grand narrative issued from the Enlightenment has finally prevailed over the other representations that previously competed for the theoretical and practical lead in human affairs. Throughout the twentieth century, various different attempts—imperialism, fascism, nazism, and communism—have been made to govern human communities differently. Most of them have now been put out of the competition. The oldest and most all-encompassing Western grand narrative, Christianity, stopped shaping the social, political, economic, and cultural institutions of Western communities long ago. Marxism, the last shoot stemming from both the Enlightenment and Christianity, seems to have lost all of its critical power. When the Berlin Wall fell, it failed definitively. By invading the shops in West Berlin, the East German crowds gave evidence that the ideal of freedom, at least of the free market, had already invaded Eastern European minds.

Thus, the practical critique of communism has been carried out. But what about the practical and theoretical critical power of Marxism? Having been in East Berlin in June and December 1989, I was able to observe how anxious and concerned the East German intellectuals were (even if they had been more or less compromised with the communist bureaucracy) to save, maintain, or elaborate a view enabling all of us to criticize both Eastern totalitarianism and Western liberalism. For somebody coming from the tradition of radical Marxism, this request sounded like an appeal to go backward and start again with the double-edged criticism, directed against both “late capitalism” and so-called “communist” society, that we had undertaken in the fifties and sixties. Although it's attractive, the purpose is vain.

Of course, it still remains quite possible to analyze the current situation of Eastern and Western Europe in terms of the rise of capitalism and the fall of bureaucratic regimes and organizations. But something would necessarily be missing from the picture, something that has cast its tragic light over the historical stage for a couple of centuries: the proletariat. According to the rigorous Marxist notion, the proletariat was not to be confused with the laboring classes. The latter are social entities that are more or less recognizable (and falsifiable) by the means of sociology and cultural anthropology, and

the former was supposedly the name of the authentic subject of modern human history. The proletariat was the subject whose unique property, its labor force, had, on the one hand, been exploited by capitalism, and that had, on the other hand, been taken by Marxism as the real motive force behind all human history. The proletariat was divested of its labor force in order to allow capital to appropriate the fruits of its peculiar and precarious capacity: to produce more value than this force consumes in the production process (an outstanding case of “good productivity” or, rather, “good productivity” itself).

What was ultimately at stake for Marxism was the transformation of the local working classes into the emancipated proletariat, that is, the conversion of the diverse communities of workers chained up in capitalist relationships into a unique self-conscious and autonomous collective subject, capable of emancipating all humanity from the disastrous effects of the injury it had suffered. Something sounded tragic in this vision: society was viewed as being possessed by the *mania*, haunted by a ghost, doomed to a tremendous *catharsis*. For the injury was a wrong that, unlike a mere damage, could not be redressed by litigations, since the court required (the court capable of equitably hearing the two parties, labor and capital) didn’t exist. The rights of the workers were the rights of mankind to self-government, and they were to be fought for through class struggle. I mean class against class, with no reference to nation, sex, race, or religion.

The mere recall of these well-known guidelines of Marxist criticism has something obsolete, even tedious, about it. This is not entirely my fault. It is also because the ghost has now vanished, dragging the last critical grand narrative with it off the historical stage. The regimes that have pretended to represent the hero have fallen into appalling buffoonery. They collapse one after the other, allowing the stage to be opened up to reconstruction in accordance with Western models. This can take years and years and can cause tremendous convulsions. Nevertheless, the process of rebuilding in this way (an unexpected, practical form of critique) cannot be resisted. And in this process of practical critique, the working classes as such have played, are playing, and will play no role. The international labor movement has been dissipated into local institutions that claim only to defend the rights of specific groups of workers. Local class struggles work in the same way as the other efforts of resistance I have mentioned, that is, as impediments by which the system is confronted and that it needs in order to improve itself.

Thus, the discourse that Marxists called the bourgeois discourse of emancipation and the communal organization connected with it, that is, liberal “late” capitalism, now look like the only survivors and winners after two centuries of struggle that sought to impose another way of reading and leading human history. This system has good reasons to claim to be the true supporter of human rights and freedom, including the right and freedom to critique.

How could the demands for radical criticism, as formulated by our East German colleagues, be satisfied if criticizing, questioning, and imagin-ing, as Castoriadis and Lefort would say today, actually require the openness that only an open system provides?

3

In terms of the current situation, the fall of the Berlin Wall is a significant event that implies a lot of historical consequences. It also has a crucial influence on the scope of critical approaches. The Persian Gulf crisis, which, at the moment I am writing, still remains in a state of suspense, is no less significant, though in a different way. It is not the first time, and perhaps not the last, that the Western system as a whole has been severely challenged by the direct and indirect effects of its imperialist policy. Obviously, the aggressive Iraqi dictatorship is a consequence of the situation created by the presence of Western powers in the Middle East for two centuries. They divided up the area according to their respective interests, reciprocal power relations, and common attempts to “solve” the contradictions that affected them, especially on the occasion of the crisis that gave birth to the First and Second World Wars. Saddam Hussein has literally been produced by the Western chancelleries and business firms in a way that is even more cynically flagrant than the way Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco were produced by the “peace” policy adopted by the winners after the First World War. By “produced” or “a product of,” I mean that they were the result of the imposition of the capitalist system’s aporias upon less developed, defeated, or, in any case, less resistant countries.

Of course, there are a lot of differences between the situations I am comparing. Let us point out two that are of great relevance to our purpose. The first is that the challenge faced by the Western system comes at a moment when the extension of its power has reached the greatest lengths ever known (especially with the opening up of the communist regions). In this regard, it seems that Saddam Hussein has not taken a good look at this worldwide change symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall. In contrast, the crisis that struck Germany and Italy during the interwar years affected both American and all other European societies as well.

As to the second difference, I would like to linger over it for a while, since it merges with the general idea of this paper. That which forms the basis of and makes possible the dictatorships to which I have referred is obviously linked to social and economic distress. Such distress is accompanied by a feeling of resentment resulting from humiliation, a feeling of which most contemporary Western minds hardly can have an appropriate representation since they have no experience of it. A necessary condition for humiliation is

that the community and culture to which one belongs is judged to be at least as eminent as the community and culture of the adversary. When it is only a matter of a recent and casual defeat, humiliation remains episodic and resentment can be overcome. This is what we expect in the case of a unified Germany.

Here is the difference that I want to underline. The Arab populations living in the Middle East belong to a long, brilliant, and worldwide civilization, Islam. They are aware of this thanks to the Muslim tradition. And they know that Islam and Arab culture have been subjected to humiliation by the West for centuries. Undoubtedly, the Desert Shield policy has awakened once more the resentment that is the permanent experience of the Islamic peoples. Moreover, as divided as the Arab states may be (an effect of the Western policy), the Arab populations do and undoubtedly will react as belonging to the ancestral community that they recognize as their own, the Islamic *Umma*. And they are undoubtedly ready to invest in any Arab figure they see as being capable of making the names of Islam and the *Umma* recognized and honored all over the world.

It is here that the force of Saddam Hussein lies, not in his military weapons. It is not by chance that this leader of the secularized Arab movement, the Baas, appeals to the *Umma* to resist the violation of Muslim holy places. And it is also here that the very challenge posed by the Gulf crisis lies. In the short term, the Baghdad dictator will undoubtedly be defeated in one way or another. In the mid-term, the Middle East map, including Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine, will undoubtedly be revised. The point, however, is whether in the long run Islam can continue to resist the wholly secularized way of life that prevails in contemporary Western and Western-identified societies, whether it will still be able to oppose the secularized West with the spiritualization or, let us say, the symbolization that completely encompasses the details of everyday life and makes Islam a total civilization rather than a specific religious belief. It represents a way for human beings to be together, one that is completely extraneous to the Western way. Like God's voice, a voice heard by Abraham and Mohammed long ago, the muezzin's voice sounds over cities and deserts recalling that the Law itself is the unique source of authority in human affairs.

Let us take the position of authority as a touchstone in order to separate the two parties facing each other in the Middle East conflict and to consider what is actually at stake there, beyond the noise of declarations and weapons. In the modern or, rather, the postmodern system, authority is a matter of arguing. It is only attributed or lent, as it were, to an individual or group that comes to occupy a place for a period of time. In principle, this place of authority remains vacant. Thus, although it is the ultimate voice of the Law, authority is designated by contract. This is the paradox of democracy in that the supreme

agency or foundation for making decisions concerning the whole community is based on the decision of the community. In this sense, the transcendence or Otherness attached to the notion of the Law that is considered as the ultimate court of appeal remains immanent to the community's sameness. The vacancy of the space of authority that I have just mentioned is a perfect example of the blankness or looseness that the open system preserves within itself, in order to allow it to criticize, correct, and adjust its own performances. To the extent that authority may be analogically represented by the figure of the father, it could be said that the father is elected by the sons and daughters among themselves.

In the Islamic tradition (like the Jewish one), however, the "father" elects his people, designates his representatives and prophets and dictates the Law to them. Posited as unfathomable, the transcendent Law is accessible only by reading the letters (the voice itself is unheard except by the prophets) that have been inscribed in the Book by the first witnesses and passed on to successive generations. Authority is a matter of interpretation rather than of argumentation—an interpretation of a special kind, which adds nothing to the letters, but only attempts to "fill up" the blank spaces between them, let us say something like a Talmudic reading.

In fact, the notion of authority as pure Otherness is common to Muslims and Jews. The difference lies in the way the moral content formulated by the reading of the Book is to be actualized. And this difference in actualization stems from the fact that the Hebrew tradition had already been crossed over by the Christian message when the Koranic law was laid down by Mohammed. The "good news" brought by Christianity is that thanks to the mystery of the incarnation, that is, the sacrifice of God's son (and thanks to the reading of it that Paul of Tarsus elaborated and imposed), the law of obedience is turned into the law of love, and the spiritual community linked by the reading of the Book may itself embody a concrete—first political (the empire), then economic (Protestant capitalism)—community. Although a theology of incarnation is missing from it, Islam retains the message that the political actualization of its Law is required as evidence. Thus, it is concerned with the task of manifesting the authority of the Book by fixing the significance of the Koranic verses and inscribing it into the worldly reality (as does Christianity, with analogous dogmatic and political consequences). As such, authority becomes a matter to be testified by secular achievements, and when such achievements are lacking, humiliation ensues. And this has not failed to be the case. When confronted with the modern and classical West, Islam was defeated because the Koranic law didn't allow the Muslim political states to develop economic power, whereas the West was authorized to do so by the dogma of the incarnation, a dogma that could legitimate success in all secular areas. In the final analysis,

this was the reason for the failure of the powerful medieval caliphates. In the modern, postmodern, and even classical Western age, the holy war seems inappropriate while wars are only economic conflicts carried on by other means. (As for the Jews, they themselves, or perhaps their circumstances, have prevented the attempt to form political communities, at least for a very long time. Humiliation is impossible when the Law requires only subtlety in reading, humbleness in realizing, and humor in judging. But the price is having to suffer at the hands of other political, social, and economic communities.)

The previous description, which is too brief and too ambitious in its scope, can be concluded in the following way: neither the liberal nor the Marxist reading can account for the current historical situation marked by both the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Gulf crisis. As to the latter, the good conscience of the West appears impoverished in the assertions that Saddam Hussein is a tyrant, that Arab people are hysterical and fanatical, that international rights are being violated, and so on, as if the West was exempt from the same sins, even recently. On the other hand, if the Marxist reading could legitimate its own discourse, it wouldn't have to confuse the Third World, the South, or the masses of the Middle East who have been and are made wretched by imperialism with the figure of the proletariat—a confusion that is absurd in theoretical and practical terms and shameful with regard to the responsibility for thinking. With regard to the fall of the Berlin Wall, things are clearer and can help us gain a better understanding of the current situation. For the fall of the wall, on the one hand, provides evidence that the more open the system, the more efficient it is; while on the other hand it shows that closed and isolated systems are doomed to disappear, either by competition or merely by entropy (Brezhnev should have studied thermodynamics a bit). In the context of the Gulf crisis, the issues are predictable, though for different reasons. However respectable Islam is as a sample of spirituality, it cannot match the concrete performances achieved by the Western system and is therefore obliged either to change its positioning (for example, by turning into merely one religious faith and practice among others) or to disappear.

Therefore, the important aspect seems to be the openness (or looseness) of systems competing with each other. With this point, two questions arise. First of all, does this mean that the whole situation should be thought of in terms of utilizable forces, that is, in terms of the notions drawn from dynamics? Secondly, why is it necessary for systems to compete? In Leibnizian metaphysics, which was also a systems theory, there wasn't anything like a struggle for victory between monads. What then is the prime mover of the competitive process?

4

To these metaphysical questions, is it necessary to give metaphysical answers? Perhaps. But the metaphysical avenue is closed. Or, at least, it has become the object of critique. This critique has developed in the empty interior space that the open system maintains and protects within itself. The system no longer needs to be legitimated on a metaphysical basis. Rather, it only needs a free space. Critique is and will always be possible and desirable. But, it has to be remarked, its conclusion is deferred; some “blanks” always remain in the “text,” whatever text it is. This blank is the resource of critique. It is also the trademark that the open system affixes to the works (*oeuvres*) of the mind.

And yet, this blank allows something besides critique: imagination. For example, it allows for a story to be told freely. I would like to describe the present historical situation in a way that is hardly critical. In fact, I would like to describe it in a manner that, quite frankly, is “representational,” in the sense of referential, imaginative rather than reflexive—in a word, naive, if not childish. It could be taken for a Voltairean tale, if I had some talent. My excuse is that this “story” is reasonably well accredited in the very serious milieus that the communities of physicists, biologists, and economists represent. It is accredited in an informal, somewhat timorous, way, as if it were the unavowed dream that the postmodern world dreams about itself. It could be said that this tale represents the grand narrative that this world stubbornly tries to tell about itself, even though the grand narratives have obviously failed. This much could be said about this fable, if it weren’t for the fact that the hero is no longer Man.

The system said:

In the incommensurable vastness of the cosmos, it happened that energy dispersed in random particles was gathered together here and there into bodies. These bodies constituted closed, isolated systems as galaxies and stars. They used the finite amount of energy with which they were provided to maintain themselves in aggregate systems resulting in the transformation of particles, a transformation that is called work. As a result of this work, energy was partially released into unusable forms, such as heat and light. Since additional energy could not be imported, however, the isolated systems were doomed to collapse after a certain period of time, as they lost their internal differentiation. Energy that had previously been gathered together into bodies was subsequently dispersed all over space. Entropy is the process whereby isolated systems are led toward the most probable distribution of their elements, that is, toward random distribution.

In a very small part of the incommensurable cosmos, there was a small galactic system called the Milky Way. Amid billions of stars, there was a very

small star named the Sun. Working like any other closed system, the Sun emitted heat, light, and diverse radioactive waves toward the bodies or planets that it had attracted around itself. Furthermore, like all closed systems, the Sun also had a fixed life expectancy. At the moment when this story was being told, it was in its middle age. The Sun still had four and a half billion years before it would collapse.

Among the planets, there was Earth. And it happened that something unexpected occurred on its surface. Thanks to the contingent constellation of various energy forms (molecules constituting terrestrial bodies, water, the atmosphere selecting solar radiations, and temperature) it happened that molecular systems were gathered together into more complex and improbable systems called cells. Here lies the first enigmatic incident whose occurrence was the condition for the continuation of this story as well as its narration. With the advent of the cell, the evidence was given that systems with some differentiation were capable of producing systems with increased differentiation according to a process that was the complete opposite of that of entropy.

What was especially amazing was the ability of unicellular bodies to reproduce themselves by spontaneously dividing into two parts, both of which were identical to the originary body. Technically referred to as scissiparity, this process of cell division seemed to ensure the perpetuation of this kind of cellular organism.

Thus, birth was born and death with it. Unlike molecules, these “living” systems were required to regularly consume external energies for survival. On the one hand, this dependence made them very fragile because they were threatened by a lack of energy. But, on the other, it “spared” them the misfortune of being doomed to collapse like isolated systems; as a result, their life expectancy wasn’t mechanically predictable.

Then another event occurred among the “living” systems: sexed reproduction. In addition to being immensely more improbable than scissiparity, this way of reproducing also allowed the offspring to be distinguished from their progenitors (thanks to the association of two different genetic codes). Hence, the “space” for unexpected events to interfere in the process of reproduction became wider, and the chance of mutations (“misreadings”) also increased.

Thereafter, the story has already been told by Darwin. What is remarkable, however, is the fact that “evolution” did not imply purposiveness. New systems appeared fortuitously. They were mechanically confronted with the existing context, that is, the existing set of systems. The challenge that thus arose was how to provide oneself with energy. Given that the available amount of energy was finite, competition was unavoidable. War was born. As a result, the most efficient or productive systems were statistically selected.

After some time (quite short in relation to astronomical time), the system called Man was selected. This was extremely improbable for the same reason that it is improbable for a superior monkey to remain upright on its hind legs. The vertical position freed the hands and allowed for the extension of the brain pan. Both manual techniques and those that operate by symbols called languages began to develop. Such techniques constituted additional prostheses enabling the human system to overcome the extreme weakness that was concomitant with its improbability.

As with unicellular systems, something equally unexpected had to happen with Man. Like the capacity of single cells to reproduce themselves in the unicellular system, Man's symbolic language had the peculiar characteristic of being recursive, that is, of being able to bring together diverse linguistic elements indefinitely (while still making sense). In addition, symbolic language had the particularity of being self-referential, that is, of taking itself as an object. Since they enjoyed similar benefits, thanks to these peculiarities of language, material techniques likewise underwent a mutation. Because of language, they could be referred to, improved upon, complexified, and accumulated.

Language also allowed individual human beings to inflect the rigid modes in which they had been living together in "primitive" communities. Various improbable forms of human aggregation arose, and they were selected according to their ability to discover, capture, and save sources of energy. In regard to this ability, there were two noteworthy "revolutions:" the Neolithic and the Industrial.

For a long time ("long," that is, when calculated in terms of human time) techniques and communities appeared at random. The probability of survival for improvable and fragile systems remained out of control. Sophisticated techniques could possibly be neglected as curiosities and fall into oblivion. Politically and economically differentiated communities could be defeated by simpler but more vigorous systems.

Nevertheless, because of the previously mentioned particularities characteristic of language, the ability to reproduce and anticipate unexpected events, including failures, an ability that had been introduced by language itself, was developing autonomously. Thus, the task of controlling unexpected occurrences, be they external or internal, became the primary task for systems to fulfill if they wanted to survive. In addition, a number of authorities began to appear in the social, economic, political, cognitive, and representational (cultural) fields.

After some time, it happened that systems called liberal democracies came to be recognized as the most appropriate for the task of controlling events in whatever field they might occur. By leaving the programs of control open to debate and by providing free access to the decision-making roles, they

maximized the amount of human energy available to the system. The effectiveness of this realistic flexibility has shown itself to be superior to the exclusively ideological (linguistic) mobilization of forces that rigidly regulated the closed totalitarian systems. In liberal democratic systems, everybody could believe what they liked, that is, could organize language according to whatever system they liked, provided that they contributed to the system as energetically as they could.

Given the increased self-control of the open system, it was likely that it would be the winner in the competition among the systems all over Earth. Nothing seemed able to stop it, or even to direct it in ways other than contributing to its development. Incidents like the collapse of the communist societies and the Gulf crisis were, on the one hand, the opportunity for the system to increase its influence while preventing it from reducing its "blank" internal space as bureaucratic regimes had already done, and, on the other hand, the occasion for the system to improve its control over other sources of energy. Moreover, the system had also started to moderate its victory over other terrestrial systems by extending its ability to regulate the ecosystem so as to ensure its survival.

Nothing seemed able to stop the development of this system except the Sun and the unavoidable collapse of the whole star system. In order to meet this predictable challenge, the system was already in the process of developing the prosthesis that would enable it to survive after the solar sources of energy, which had contributed to the genesis and maintenance of the living systems, were wiped out.

All the research that was in progress at the time this story was told—that is, taken at random, research in logic, econometrics, and monetary theory, data processing, physics of conductors, astronomy and astronautics, biology and medicine, genetics, dietetics, catastrophe theory, chaos theory, strategy and ballistics, sports, systems theory—all this research was devoted to the problem of adjusting or replacing human bodies so that human brains would still be able to work with the only forms of energy left available in the cosmos—and thus preparing for the first exodus of the negentropic system far from Earth with no return.

What Man and "its" brain or, better, the Brain and its man would look like in the days of this final terrestrial challenge, the story did not say.

Part IV
More “jews”

20

German Guilt (1948)

Right from the start of *Schuldfrage*,¹ Karl Jaspers takes a hard look at something that has not yet been *thought*, in the strict sense of the word: German guilt. This clear-sightedness has an ethical aim, that of purging the complexes attendant upon the German reaction to the accusation or the feeling of guilt. Hence, from the beginning, Jaspers implicitly makes the assumption that the effective, lived will to clear-sightedness leads to a catharsis and thence to a reconstruction (*Wiedergutmachung*) of the self and of things. Consequently, he locates the answer to the *Schuldfrage* in the individual rather than the political sphere. A number of designs converge, in excess of the problem proper, so as to appear to sketch an entire moral (or religious) system, founded on the twin assumptions of a sin against oneself and against God and of the absolute efficacy of the understanding. An initial hesitation between Kierkegaard and Socrates ends up as a strong desire for the concrete. It indeed seems, despite various contradictory formulas, that for Jaspers the concrete is the individual: the individual as self-consciousness.

1. The introduction explains that the book is neither a justification in the eyes of the world nor an apology for Germany. On the contrary, Jaspers seeks to enter into a struggle not against world opinion, but against the opinion that the Germans have of themselves, and especially against the opinion that they acquire as a result of an excessive confidence in the immediacy of feeling. In extreme circumstances, affectivity might be able to organize and govern an existence, to support its morality; yet it would not know either how to constitute this morality or how to explain this life. The confused awareness of a sin must become a clear knowledge.
2. There is responsibility. Legal responsibility (*Kriminelle Schuld*): obedience to or breach of the law, which falls under the jurisdiction of the national or international tribunal; political responsibility (*Politische Schuld*): insofar as

a people is responsible for the state that it gives itself or to which it gives itself and has to answer to the conqueror for it; moral responsibility (*Moralische Schuld*): if every consciousness is free to act according to its judgment and to judge itself in terms of its action; lastly, metaphysical responsibility (*Metaphysische Schuld*) because all individual intervention or nonintervention engages human solidarity, in its widest and most precise sense: God alone is the judge of this.

3. Of course, the distinction between these four responsibilities is an abstraction: in actuality, they are interpenetrating. Metaphysical sin, whether individual or collective, always requires the judgment of the self by the self, often that of the tribunal; and the other sins thus fall into this category: every human fault has a metaphysical meaning. Likewise, the moral engages with the political, whether it integrates itself in the political by virtue of the free participation of the members of the collectivity or whether it separates itself from the political, either in calm acceptance of the imposed order or in the blindness of a mass ideology: the deliberate refusal of politics by the moral is still a form of control. Jaspers, following Herodotus, thus opposes the freedom of the Greek system to Persian despotism, West to East. On the other hand, there remain, in law, categorical distinctions: it is not possible to judge a collectivity like an individuality, that is, to bring an accusation of a moral order against a political grouping. “Typological” thought (*the Germans, the Jews*), presupposes a degradation of the individual as such: this was the basis of the profoundly abstract Nazi systematization. In short, there is no collective *soul*. On the other hand, if metaphysical error entails actionable legislative moves, this error would not, as such, be conscious of any particular legal condemnation. “What matters in the eyes of God does not, nevertheless, matter in the eyes of men” (p. 20). Metaphysical responsibility concerns humanity not as individuals but as a group: individuals are not the judges of human nature. Finally, political guilt is not a criminal guilt because it pertains only to the one who was engaged in the struggle in which this guilt arose: the conquerors alone, who have risked their lives, can decide on the life of the conquered, who *must* carry out the sentence. The conquerors must do so by virtue of the Hegelian dialectic of master and slave, that is, by virtue of a necessity of historical evolution, which seems to me here a little superfluous, stuck on. The fact remains, however, and rightly so this time, that a neutral country is not in any position to judge the political guilt of belligerent parties.

4. After a brief examination of the possible systems of defense, Jaspers goes to the heart of his subject: the German problem that will be explained by the preceding analyses.

Of course there was a crime. It makes no difference to invoke the fact that the international legal statutes of Nuremberg were established after the fact, that the judges were sometimes criminal themselves, or that their justice serves only to mask brute force: Oradour and Auschwitz belong to history. You can't even excuse the Wehrmacht by setting it apart as an honorable machine for producing heroism. Nor can you wish the Germans as a whole to be also judged in the trial. There is no outrage at the German nation in the institution of the Nuremberg tribunal; the only matter at issue there is to draw out the consequences of the Germans' inability to free themselves from their regime: their national shame was to *let themselves* be liberated. Jaspers next insists on the significance of this international tribunal: a promise of peace, he says, if not an institution of peace. (Two years later, we don't think about it anymore; the judge comes after the crime.)

5. Furthermore, German political responsibility is obvious. The only problem to be posed, according to Jaspers, is whether this responsibility must be borne by individuals. In reality there was, generally, no lived or thought participation in the regime and what it entailed, namely, violence; on the contrary, there was a secret and profound resistance at the level of conscience. There is thus no collective moral culpability of the people (as there is of institutional organizations such as the Gestapo, the SS, or the Reichskabinett), but a collective guilt insofar as the collectivity allowed a minority to act. The notion of an apolitical individual no longer makes sense in this century: "there is nothing external to the modern State" (p. 40). Malraux said, after Napoleon: "Tragedy, now, is politics." Abstention is a policy; Germany's lassitude in the passionate movements after 1918 and under Weimar was, whether one likes it or not, a political attitude, as is now clear.

6. Moral guilt is an absolute; though it takes diverse forms, each is equally keen: moral secrecy ("Das Leben in der Maske"),² bad conscience (it was the duty of the military itself to contest certain orders, a scandalous notion among the heirs of Frederick the Great), half measures ("the regime did away with unemployment"), present acceptance of the worst with an eye to a better future (this was how German intellectuals let themselves be sucked in), omission, inaction, fence sitting—or sheer opportunism. The denazification tribunals must judge adherence to the party in terms of these various modalities: here action draws its meaning from intention.

7. Metaphysical sin: to prefer life and a bad conscience to a clear conscience and death. Morally this is not sinning because, morally speaking, consciousness must first be preserved in order to be improved: here the alternative is decisive, it is only thinkable in terms of a human bloc, abstracted from history, and at

the same time polarizing it—which one may follow Jaspers in naming as God, if one pleases. In 1938, with the burning of the synagogues and the first massive deportations of Jews, Germany killed itself, and let itself get stuck in fear. At that time, the only good consciences were in the camps, political deportees organizing themselves in the face of the direct terrorist regime of the SS or the indirect regime of common law—an active negation of the master by the slaves, an acceptance of servitude insofar as it affirms a dogged freedom.

8. What Jaspers then calls “excuse” (*Entschuldigung*) is rather a bundle of possible explanations, all valid, in my opinion, and more of which might have been found than the author does: but this would be the work of a historian. “Germany under the Nazi regime was a house of correction”: ergo the detainees are not responsible for the actions of the administration. It may be answered that this is an easy excuse; they chose the regime. But we should not criticize before understanding: we know that it is not easy to disorganize a terrorist police system. Historically, a collective psychosis that leads to silence develops. Secondly, frontiers without defenses and a country without unity give rise on the one hand to the establishment of a powerful militarized whole, and on the other hand to an economic and political instability that authorizes violent force. In the same way, the rupture with the spiritual traditions and the still-uncertain institution of new forms of labor—common phenomena in all the postwar nations—reach their breaking point in Germany. In the third place, the errors of Allied policy at Versailles, its weakness in the face of the indecisiveness of fascist Italy and the de facto situations created by the Hitler regime gave very little prompting to the German democrats or communists to harden themselves into an eventual resistance. Jaspers ends this quite valid analysis with a somewhat sentimental exhortation to the Western democracies not to give themselves over to despotism.

9. There is only individual salvation. Purification (*Reinigung*) will be an action of self on the self, without which Germany will once more plunge into the mechanism of violence. Neither reciprocal accusations, the contempt and the abandonment of the self, wicked pride, stubborn self-justification (often valid) at the individual level, taking refuge in a notion of historical evolution with a more or less moral end (what goes around comes around), nor the mystical invocation of an expiation will open the path of purification. “Purification is the route of man as man” (p. 93). Renewal (*Wiedergutmachung*) can only be the effect of a purification. The latter gives its meaning to the former; interiority takes precedence over the act. And this new interiority can be acquired only through an assiduous, honest, abstract reflection on the complexes with which Germany has lived and thought since 1933 (and perhaps earlier), a reflection

taken up with an eye to a future that will belong to it: “Clarifying our responsibility is at the same time clarifying our new life” (p. 93). Jaspers has a philosopher’s confidence in the ethical consequences of any serious achievement of self-awareness. He has performed a psychoanalytic task: revealing to the invalid the sources, the modes, and the consequences of its sickness. It is up to the invalid to cure itself. That will take “humanity and moderation.”

In short, one has to be sick in the first place (and, effectively, the Germans do not know that they are sick), the better to recover later on. A roundabout route. Of course, the ethical path is not the most direct one. Nor is it evident whether or not it leads to a true end: for what proof can there be of a German sickness, that the thought of sickness is not merely the product of the thought of healing? It can be argued that, for Jaspers, ignorance is itself a sickness. But ignorance of what, one may ask.

The passage from isolated consciousnesses to a collective consciousness is not a matter of addition: democratic freedom is not the achieved sum of individual liberations. By dint of interiorizing freedom one betrays it, and the exasperation of individual rights brings back despotism. Most importantly, it is not clear in the name of what the collective transfiguration of the individual as such that Jaspers calls for could take place. The people’s desire for a clear conscience does not extend so far as to produce a catharsis on its own account. A catharsis can only be imagined, strictly speaking, in a social form in which the individual participates as an individual, that is, in a religious movement. And the very word *purification* already betrays a theology (or a mythology) in which ethics comes to an end, opens out into contemplation. But where could such a religious movement find a place in the reality of present-day Germany? The most clear-sighted Christians agree with Kogon (in his *SS Staat*) that what overcame the SS system proper in the concentration camps so as to establish a *society* in the camps was not their religious belief, their purity, but the organization of political blocks and compromises. In short, they accept that private belief is in fact subordinate to the conditions of history. Good politics do not go hand in hand with pious sentiments, especially in tight situations: we belong to the age of the assassinated Gandhi. And indeed Camus, in his “Letters to a German Friend” reminds us that effective combat requires the use of the enemy’s own weapons, however odious they may be. Likewise, you cannot escape from a suffocating collective situation by means of individual salvation.

Therefore, no reflection upon the past as past (instead of as sin) can be effective. One cannot seriously expect the Germans to understand their present clear-sightedly, that is, in the light of their past. If they have to, they will

understand their present in the shadow of this past; in any case, they have better things to think about and do. At the level of the history of peoples, the past as such is either dead or only of concern insofar as it conditions the current situation. For a people, the consciousness of its past, even if it is without illusions, can only be bad conscience. (Good) conscience requires that they examine what remains to be done. A nation does not need a spotless past to conquer itself, but a past pure and simple, that is, the opportunity to think itself concretely and to turn experience and trial into *knowledge*. The Germans must first shed their collective mythology if they want to integrate themselves into Western political civilization, which is liberal, realistic, and bloodless. They must define themselves in terms of conditioning rather than identify themselves in terms of destiny. Jaspers's all-too-brief attempt to bring to light the diverse factors in terms of which the recent history of his country has been written has more to offer than the ethical solution he proposes. But why give this reflection the shameful name of *Entschuldigung* [excuse]? This name nips its fecundity in the bud. Above all, it admits that this reflection is perhaps in effect nothing but a way of easing remorse, of imposing too heavy a burden of guilt on history and the nations that make it. A study of the responsibility of other nations would indeed be worthwhile as part of an ensemble of objective reflections; from the perspective immediately adopted by Jaspers, such a study seems equally pointless or disastrous, seems to be an avoidance of the issue.

This sharing, this dispersal of responsibilities, remains the paradoxical defining characteristic of the book. The desire to be concrete, affirmed at the beginning, eventually loses its way in a conclusion that pays more attention to its logic than to its efficacy. Drawing distinctions between various levels of responsibility is legitimate, in itself. But if criminal guilt ends up applying only to a few accused, if political error becomes blurred when one admits that individuals did not in general have a hand in it, and if the only result is a generally diffused bad conscience, there remains an ethical and metaphysical responsibility, honestly admitted, of course, but of which it is also said (and rightly so) that it does not fall under human jurisdiction, since moral consciousness and religious consciousness elude our tribunals; the human condition alone is in question. It is no longer only a matter of constructing a system of philosophy: that was already the case, as is well known. In beginning his work, Jaspers took care not to detach the political from the individual, who is at the root of the political. However, the individual was the one who was torn away from the political: nazism, a specific event localizable in history and in the world, cannot be brought to trial by any moral or metaphysical law, except in terms of its consequences. This political phenomenon is not allowed its autonomy anywhere in the world.

And this is doubtless the case because Jaspers has agreed to pose the problem in the terms in which the foreigner poses it to Germany on a daily basis, the terms of accusation and defense. Jaspers pleads guilty. *Confiteor*, he says, since he is inward-looking and since penitence is moral. Now, he should have asked the preliminary question of whether the polemic of guilt was capable of producing conclusions that might have a concrete validity. No one nowadays is unaware of the importance of the Nazi phenomenon: it introduces, as Jaspers feels, a new conception and a new formation of humanity (perhaps the most ancient); it installs a radical breach between the nineteenth century and the present one, emphasizes the probable failure of our Western civilization and of “Italianism,” crushes liberal thought under forces of destiny. Jaspers wants to save this civilization, this thought, from the mortal sickness in which national socialism left them languishing. But Germany’s guilt is one fact, and Germany’s future is another. Is it not illusory, and hence illegitimate, to tie the two together, to rely on the former to prepare for the latter?

To which Dufrenne and Ricoeur respond that Jaspers “is not in the least concerned to open a political debate.”³ The excellent analysis they present of *Die Schuldfrage* justifies Jaspers’s position because it understands and clarifies it from the inside. The only freedom that remains for each German is to assume responsibility for his fault, a solitary freedom par excellence. This assumption of guilt requires a lucidity that points out and condemns any blockage. Here, rationality comes to their aid and directs the guilty conscience toward the consciousness of its guilt. Individuals, having been freed in this way, not from their fault, but from their ignorance, are animated with a rigorous desire to “make amends” and open themselves to happy willingness and to goodwill. They can then say, “It is enough that God exists.” Dufrenne and Ricoeur close by emphasizing the moral generosity of this thought, and above all its coherence with previously developed philosophical themes, which *Die Schuldfrage* applies to the (“tragically”) concrete test of history. One cannot refuse to pay this compliment: Jaspers’s book shows a great deal of honesty, and noblesse.

Once the book has been read, however, one question remains: *why* was this book written? Not to what purpose, but for what motives? On the one hand, it is clear that Jaspers’s aim is not political, and that the “concrete” of which he speaks is not that of history; on the other hand, his final conclusion is given as the promise of a regeneration for *Germany* (or at least of the Germans). On the one hand, the *Reinigung* [purification] is a conversion that can be thought independently of any collectivity. On the other hand, this purification is offered to the German collectivity. And so on. In short, he is trying to pose a political problem nonpolitically. A solution is even claimed: the book does not present itself as a set of remarks but is dogmatic; it condemns errors, it indicates a path to salvation. Whence proceed my criticisms:

politically, “accepting guilt” means nothing. Jaspers cannot prevent this prescription from being understood politically: a solution to the German problem can only be political. The recent strikes by unions in the Ruhr, whether or not they have been infiltrated by the Kominform, have a significance completely different from that of a retrospective analysis. After the ordeal of the camps, German politicians correctly gauge the measure of a hope that torture has only spared. Such is the material of which the future history of a people is made.

21

Heidegger and “the jews”: A Conference in Vienna and Freiburg

(1989)

I

Introduction to the Vienna Conference

I come to Vienna with fear. When I was twelve, I studied German as a “living language.” My lycée had found me a German-speaking correspondent who studied French. He was, at that time (1937) he could only be, Austrian. He was Viennese. A year later, our correspondence was interrupted: 99.73 percent of the vote in favor of the Anschluss. German became a dead language for me, spoken only by the men of death, the army and the police of the Third Reich.

I continued to read and study the language. It became and has remained the language of culture, of literature, of philosophy—in particular when it comes to us through the constellation of great names that marked the beginning of the twentieth century here. But the pleasure of the intellect and of sensibility that the language gives me is and will always be a wounded pleasure. For half a century, this wound has borne the symbolic name of Auschwitz, which is also called Theresienstadt. I know that the *Shoah* is something other than this wound, which is, when all is said and done, a personal one. All the same, I would like to dedicate the pages that follow to my lost correspondent.

I fear Vienna more than Berlin or Frankfurt for one simple reason, which is perhaps imaginary. Austria is Catholic. As a child, I was raised in Catholicism. It was of course “à la française,” and I know Italy well enough to know that there are differences between Catholicisms.

But I also know the power for healing and forgetting, of seduction that can be exercised over individual and collective consciousness by *one* Catholicism that is present in all the national Catholicisms, and that is Roman. What I fear here is the conjunction of catholicity and the tradition

of the Reich. For historic, geographical, and political reasons, Austria has been able to heal the *Shoah* without working it out: that is my fear, and my prejudice.

If I come to Vienna nonetheless, it is first of all because of the courageous stubbornness of my editor, Peter Engelmann; and thanks to the invitation of the direction of this prestigious museum *für angewandte Kunst* [for applied art], and also because in suggesting that I speak of *Heidegger und “die Juden,”* they offer me the occasion to make a modest contribution to recalling something that never stops making itself be forgotten.

But I have a third reason. His name is Aurelius Freytag. In the name of the Österreichische Hochschülerschaft [Austrian university association], Monsieur Freytag has invited me to take part in a colloquium organized by that association concerning the condition and the destiny of the university institution today, in particular in the framework of European integration.

I did not reply to his invitation, and if he is here, I apologize publicly. It was only for lack of time and because I knew that I was not free at the planned date. For Aurelius Freytag attached a dossier to his letter. This dossier is the description and program for a series of workshops and lectures organized by the Austrian university association last November on the fiftieth anniversary of the *Kristallnacht*.

I have only one thing to say about this dossier: it *authorized* me to come to Vienna. My imagination was no longer preoccupied by “Austria” but by real Austrians, committing themselves to the task of working through the poorly healed trauma completely.

I also want to add one more preliminary remark: I have not forgotten that my country, alone among those of “democratic” Europe, managed to produce a “state” capable of active collaboration with Hitler. Thus I do not come before you to speak as a Frenchman to Austrians. We speak together, if you like, as Europeans who are trying not to forget.

Introduction to the Freiburg Conference

Forty years ago I took part in the first postwar international training course organized in Freiburg im Breisgau, at which young German and French students met for a month. Freiburg was a city in ruins, and Baden-Wurtemberg was still under French occupation. Both groups were still traumatized. Although their encounter no longer took place in terms of domination, it was not yet on an equal footing. They sought a common understanding of their encounter in their trauma.

On this occasion Jean Beaufret, who sponsored the French group, took some of us to visit Heidegger at Todtnauberg. Beaufret had been one of the

very first to introduce Heidegger's thought to France, by translating and commenting on his works.

I remember a sly peasant in his *Hütte*, dressed in traditional costume, of sententious speech and shifty eye, apparently lacking in shame and anxiety, protected by his knowledge and flattered by his disciple. This picture was enough to prevent me from becoming a "Heideggerian." I take no pride in this. These were fugitive impressions, due no doubt to the prejudices of a young Parisian. I continued to read his work.

This was 1947. It seems to me that we have to begin our encounter again. For another "war" has kept us apart for some forty years. I come here with the intention of putting an end to it, no doubt unconsciously animated by the spirit of the time, which is interested in commerce rather than war; but also with an eye to understanding something and making it understood here, something that is not understood on either side of the Rhine. And I cannot believe that it is by chance that the occasion is provided by the name of the former rector of Freiburg im Breisgau.

II

My book *Heidegger and "the jews"* belongs to the group of French publications that followed the release of Victor Farías's book *Heidegger and Nazism*: articles in the major press, in magazines, in specialized journals, books, "dossiers," radio and television programs.

In this lively and sometimes violent debate, I wanted to intervene to try to understand Heidegger's silence on the subject of the *Shoah*, to which Adorno had given the generic name of "Auschwitz."

In doing this, I was working with a distinction that Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe had made in *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, and even more clearly in *La poésie comme expérience* (where he reflects on Paul Celan's interview with Heidegger at Todtnauberg). Heidegger's political engagement within the National Socialist party in 1933 and 1934 is one thing; his absolute silence (except for one phrase) concerning the *Shoah* right up to his death is another.

Both these facts are extremely serious. By serious, I mean that they demand to be thought rigorously. But they cannot both be thought in the same terms or under the same rubric. It is possible to think of the Nazi engagement in terms of philosophical politics (certainly not in terms of political philosophy, in the usual sense). But I do not think that the silence about the extermination of the Jews arises in the least from a political critique. First, because the extermination itself is not a political fact and second, and most importantly, because the prohibition on speaking of the genocide, or at least his inability to say one word about it, is by no means the product of a political attitude.

Rather, this silence affects what is most essential to Heidegger’s thought, as is attested by the fact that it continued for forty years.

III

I will briefly restate the rules that I set myself when dealing with this double problem in my book:

1. One must admit the importance and the greatness of Heidegger’s thought.
2. One must admit the seriousness of the compromise with what Heidegger calls “the movement” (whose “internal truth and greatness” he affirmed even in 1953), and one must admit that his persistent silence on the genocide is not the product of a *lapsus* or a minor failure of memory.
3. One must maintain both assertions—that of the greatness of the thought and that of the objectionable nature of the “politics”—without concluding that if one is true then the other is false, according to the implication that if Heidegger is a great thinker, then he cannot have been a Nazi or, if he was a Nazi, then he cannot be a great thinker.
4. Dealing with this double assertion must not mean just noting the conflict, but finding its internal logic.

IV

The German intellectual class has often been surprised that Heidegger’s nazism and his silence should give rise to a whole “affair” in France. They tend to point out that the facts had already been known for a long time. And for this reason, they add, Heidegger’s thought has been removed from the German philosophical heritage. How can it be that the same thing did not happen in France?

It is now over a year since Fariás’s dossier was published in France, and it has just been published in Germany. I am not claiming that this disparity is the *cause* of the difference in reaction in the two countries. Rather, it is an effect, the effect of an intellectual situation that has been marked by the isolation of our two countries for at least thirty or forty years. I can summarize (and therefore caricature) this situation in the following way (a French way).

Since the end of the eighteenth century, after the French Revolution and during the difficult formative period of the nation-states of Europe, there has been no important French philosophy. By this I mean no philosophy adequate

to the world in its development. Philosophy was German. The French articulated the facts of this new world, the bourgeois world, in terms of history, sociology, and politics, and also (perhaps above all) in terms of literature and painting. The French philosophers were politicians and writers at the same time, as they had been since the Enlightenment. To put this another way, they were dedicated to exploring social and linguistic relations along with the relation to thought.

On this side of the Rhine, the great tradition of speculative thought developed, the heir of theology (herein lay a profound difference with French thought), which attempted to overcome the Kantian crisis. This thought was at the origin of the institution of the German university. Thus the philosophy of the professor-doctors arose, the summit of intellectual activity and a model of knowledge and wisdom offered to the nation. In France, it was understood that it was the people who possessed this wisdom, and that the function of education was to turn the individuals who compose that people into enlightened and free citizens, capable of deciding their lot in "full knowledge of the facts." If there is philosophy, it consists above all in a reflection on being-together, on its ideals and the means to achieve it, beginning with language.

The "crisis of the people" is as it were permanent in French history since the Revolution, not only in the social and political reality of the people, but in the way it is understood, and in the way in which one writes one's history and one's mind. I summarize.

Starting with the great (international) crisis at the end of the 1920s, French thinkers took over those elements of the most radical critical tradition (and hence of German language) that could help them to continue a reflection on the profound transformations affecting the nature of community and on the hidden aspects of the so-called "subject" of that community revealed by those transformations. Thus they invoked Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Husserl and Heidegger, a version of Hegel reread by Kojève, the later Wittgenstein, and then Benjamin and Adorno. They subjected the philosophy of the subject (the legacy of Descartes and the "philosophes" of the eighteenth century) to a strong critique, along with the ideas of transparency or self-evidence, of free will, of communication, of the adequacy of reason. Even in an heir of Husserl like Merleau-Ponty, the late writings bear witness to an inclination to look for a nonphenomenological ontology drawn from Heidegger and from Freud as reread by Lacan. Little by little, by widely divergent routes, they developed the ideas of writing, of figure, of textuality, of difference (the *differend*), which characterize what foreigners call French thought (completely wrongly, since it is almost unknown in France and it is not homogeneous). And all this took place in close collaboration between philosophers, writers, and artists.

After 1945, the German intellectual class, essentially made up of professor-doctors, takes fright at the use that the French have been able to make of the thinkers that I mentioned. Mainly concerned to establish the conditions of democratic debate in a country where the people seem to have been doomed, for two centuries, to be first of all subject to a *Reich*, German thinkers direct their attention to the problems of the rationality of language, of dialogue, of shared certainty, and of consensus. They find the resources for this inquiry in the tradition of the *Aufklärung* [Enlightenment] and in contemporary philosophies of language, especially Anglo-American philosophy.

For them, the Heidegger affair does not exist, it is already done with. It is the last episode of a century of irrationalism. For the French, Heidegger’s “politics” constitute an affair because they mean that the task of rewriting and deconstruction that they have undertaken along with Heidegger is not innocent of the worst kind of erring. And thus the question is asked as follows: what do “worst,” “erring,” or “fault” mean, if you have to run the risk of “analytic” thought in Freud’s sense or of “genealogical” thought in Nietzsche’s sense, or of “existential-oncological” thought in Heidegger’s sense? Here we encounter a deficiency in our capacity to think Heideggerian “politics” (the engagement and the silence): the lack of a faculty of judgment or a feeling for the Law, to put it in Kant’s terms, or the lack of a dependence on the Other and a responsibility that is other than ontological, if we phrase it in Emmanuel Lévinas’s terms.

V

It is precisely on this issue that my idea of “the jews” comes in. I quote a summary of it from *Heidegger and “the jews”*:

I write “the jews” this way neither out of prudence nor for lack of something better. I use lower case to indicate that I am not thinking of a nation. I make it plural to signify that it is neither a figure nor a political (Zionism), religious (Judaism), or philosophical (Jewish philosophy) subject that I put forward under this name. I use quotation marks to avoid confusing these “jews” with real Jews. What is most real about real Jews is that Europe, in any case, does not know what to do with them: Christians demand their conversion; monarchs expel them; republics assimilate them; Nazis exterminate them. “The jews” are the object of a dismissal with which Jews, in particular, are afflicted in reality. They are that population of souls to which Kafka’s writings, for example, have given shelter only to better expose them to their condition as hostages. Forgetting souls, like all souls, but to whom the Forgotten never ceases to return to claim its due. The Forgotten is not to be remembered for what it

has been and what it is, something that never ceases to be forgotten. And this *something* is not a concept or a representation, but a “fact,” a *Factum* (Kant II, A56): namely, that one is obligated before the Law, in debt. It is the “affection” of this “fact” that the dismissal persecutes.

To put it another way, the expression “the jews” refers to all those who, wherever they are, seek to remember and to bear witness to something that is constitutively *forgotten*, not only in each individual mind, but in the very thought of the West. And it refers to all those who assume this anamnesis and this witnessing as an obligation, a responsibility, or a debt, not only toward thought, but toward justice.

VI

Here I ought to give a detailed account of the figure, or rather the nonfigure, of this forgotten thing. I will content myself with providing an example, by way of the Freudian concept of *Urverdrängung* [primary repression], in the following series of quotations from *Heidegger and “the jews”*:

The hypothesis of an unconscious without “representational formations” (which Freud proposes when he seeks to understand unconscious affect and *Urverdrängung*) necessitates a break from the philosophy of consciousness, even if the term “unconscious” still refers to it. It can only be deployed in what Freud calls metapsychology, that is, a topics, a dynamics, and an economy that deal respectively with the instances, the forces, and the conflicts of force (attraction and repulsion), and the results (effects) assessed quantitatively (Freud, *Métapsychologie*, 1915–17).

Are the above terms metaphors? They are the elements of a metaphysics that is inherent in all modern physics, and which, under the name of metapsychology, Freud directs toward the determination of the state of the soul itself, which has, ever since, been considered a system of forces. (11–12)¹

Once the physical hypothesis of the mind is accepted, it suffices to imagine that an “excitation”—that is, a disturbance of the system of forces constituted by the psychic apparatus (with its internal tensions and countertensions, its filtering of information onto the respective paths, the fixing in word and thing representations, and the evacuation of the nonfixed through the respective paths of the system [—]) affects the system when it cannot deal with it: either at the point of entry, inside, or at the point of exit. Not even the protective shield of banal temporality can deal with it. It is an excitation that is not “introduced”: it affects, but does not

enter; it has not been *introduced* [in English in the original] and remains unpresented (Freud, "Repression," *Standard Edition* vol. 14). It is thus a shock, since it "affects" a system, but a shock of which the shocked is unaware, and which the apparatus (the mind) cannot register in accordance with and in its internal physics; a shock by which it is not affected. This excitation need not be "forgotten," repressed according to representational procedures, nor through *acting out* [in English in the original]. Its "excess" (of quantity, of intensity) exceeds the excess that gives rise (presence, place and time) to the unconscious and the preconscious. It is "in excess" like air and earth are in excess for the life of a fish.

Even so, its "effect" is there nevertheless. Freud calls it "unconscious affect." Freud was the very first to say to himself: pure nonsense, an affect that does not affect consciousness. How can one say it affects? What is a feeling that is not felt *by anyone*? What is this "anyone"? How can I, he asks (Freud, "The Unconscious," *Standard Edition* vol. 14), even be led on the path of this insane hypothesis if there exists no witness? Is not the affected the only witness to the affect? In a sense, this problem is even more insoluble than Wittgenstein's idiolect. For the silence surrounding the "unconscious affect" does not affect the pragmatic realm (the transfer of a meaning to the listener); it affects the physics of the speaker. It is not that the latter cannot make himself understood; he himself does not hear anything. We are confronted with a silence that does not make itself heard as silence.

Something, however, *will make* itself understood, "later." That which will not have been introduced will have been "acted," "acted out," "*enacted*" [in English in the original], played out, in the end—and thus represented. But without the subject recognizing it. It will be represented as something that has never been presented. Renewed absurdity. For instance, as a symptom, a phobia (Emma in the store). This will be understood as feeling, fear, anxiety, feeling of a threatening excess whose motive is obviously not in the present context. A feeling, it seems, born of nothing that can be verified in the "present" situation in a perceptible, verifiable, or falsifiable way, and which therefore necessarily points to an elsewhere that will have to be located outside this situation, outside the present contextual situation, imputed to a different site than this one. And how can this site be localized without passing through a "memory," without alleging the existence of a reserve where this site has been retained, in nonlocalized and nonlocalizable fashion, and without consciousness having been informed about it? This sudden feeling is as good as a testimony, through its unsettling strangeness, which "from the exterior" lies in reserve in the interior, hidden away and from where it can on occasion depart to return from the outside to assail the mind as if it were issued not from it but from the incidental situation. (12–13)

A few further observations:

1. Since this unconscious affect is, as Freud puts it elsewhere, a representative without a representation, it eludes the general critique of representation. The discussion of philosophical representations in the West, which have been the object of the Heideggerian anamnesis since 1934, is dedicated to leaving this affect forgotten.

2. As long as this unconscious affect remains forgotten, it will give rise to inexplicable formulations (expressions, symptoms). It will repeat itself without letting itself be recognized. Its "expressions" form a tissue of "screen memories" that block the anamnesis. The *Durcharbeitung* [working through] is a work that passes through these screens. Anamnesis is not an act of historical memorization.

3. In a sense, anamnesis is interminable. In effect, the original shock is not *representable*, having never been presented. Or at least its representation is always a trap.

4. In Western history, the Jewish condition, and it alone, is the impossible witness, always improper (there are only bad jews), to this unconscious affect. It alone admits that an event has "affected" (does not cease to affect) a people without that people being able or permitted to represent it, that is, to discover and restore its meaning. This event is called the Covenant that the (unnameable) Lord has imposed on a people (the Hebrews) who are not ready to submit to and respect it. The anguished (exultant and painful) violence of this seizure is accompanied by a Promise of forgiveness. While waiting for the Messiah, the Covenant and the Promise are once more violently recalled to (unworthy) memory by the prophets. Anyone who represents himself as the Messiah (Jesus) is suspect. He is suspected of being only a "screen memory" that betrays the immemorial event of the Law. This suspicion is practiced in the name of fidelity to the affect that stems from this event, an event that is always on the point of being forgotten.

Thus it is that the Jews cannot manage to find their place in the systems by which thought is represented in the politics and social practices of the European West. They cannot form a "nation" in the medieval sense, nor a people in the modern sense. The Law forbids them to acquire the communitarian status of an ethnic group. Their relation to the event of the Covenant and the Promise is a relation of dependence, not a relation to a land and a history but a relation to the letters of a book and to a paradoxical temporality. The book is not the object of a hermeneutic reading that might expose and accumulate its meaning, but of a talmudic reading that tries to get at that meaning through the screens of previous interpretations.

They are not missionaries, having no representation to spread, no formula suitable for remedying evil. The Final Solution was the project of exterminating the (involuntary) witnesses to this forgotten event and of having done with the unrepresentable affect once and for all, having done with the anguish that it is their task to represent.

VII

Let me come back to the Heidegger affair. What matters to me in it is both to determine the relation between his thought and nazism and to make his silence on the *Shoah* intelligible.

Things are clear on the first point:

1. Heidegger's nazism, or rather his engagement with the movement, is not a *necessary* consequence of his thought at the time. To put it another way, it is not true that *Sein und Zeit* is, in itself, a Nazi or proto-Nazi book. On the other hand, it is true that this book *allows* or *leaves open* the possibility of such an engagement. The political texts of 1933 and 1934 are riddled with terms that are central to the existential-ontological thought of 1927. The very same tone is present. This proximity between the political and philosophical texts prevents us from conceiving of his engagement in the movement as a circumstantial “joining up,” as a simple taking out of a party card. The realization of a thought is at stake.

2. The activity of the rector of Freiburg im Breisgau within the National Socialist party can only be divergent from, and in excess over, the party line. I would sketch this divergence and this excess in the following way.

The Nazi party expressed the immense anguish into which the country had plunged once it had been defeated in 1918, crushed by the Treaty of Versailles and pulverized by the crises of 1921 and 1928, and the Nazis exploited this anguish in order to seize power. The party claimed to have a cure for this anguish. Heidegger meditated on and articulated this anguish. He recognized that it had an existential-ontological status and authenticity. Under the cover of the swastika, he addressed the student generation, offering them the knowledge of their distress. He thought that by this narrow and perilous route he could protect the future of German thought (which would be embodied in this generation) from the double threat that he saw hanging over its institution, the university. The double peril consisted of (1) the threat of academic neutrality, of deafness to reality and (2) the threat that the means and the ends of thought would be subordinated to the interests of a contemptible political clique.

3. The rectorate is thus a key position in this strategy. It is like a hinge between the militant of the “movement” and the philosopher of *Sein und Zeit*. For the rectorate, if one thinks about it, can be analyzed according to two ideas or two themes. A rector is a scholar and a guide. The terms *Wissen* [to know] and *Führung* [to guide] correspond to these two themes, in *Sein und Zeit* as well as in the political speeches of 1933.

I do not have the time to analyze these terms fully here. I supply a sketch, itself too brief, in sections 19 and 20 of my book.

That sketch at least shows how authentic *Wissen*, elaborated in paragraphs 38, 54, 67, 68, and 69 of *Sein und Zeit*, finds its faithful echo in the Tübingen Conference on November 30, 1933, and, of course, in the rector’s address of May 1933. The same demonstration can be performed as regards the authentic content (established in 1927) and the political use (in November 1933) of the term *Führung*. It would also be possible to extend this investigation to words like *Entscheidung* [decision], *Geschick* [destiny], and *Volk* [people].

In all these cases, the filiation between the political and the existential-ontological is indisputable. It is what allows one to understand Heidegger’s engagement in the movement. Under cover of nazism, the rector “enacts” the thought of *Sein und Zeit*.

4. The engagement is thus not simply “Nazi,” it has a completely different import, which might be called “differentially subversive.” The introduction of the key terms of *Sein und Zeit* into the political address cannot fail to arouse suspicion of the Rosenberg Amt² and the whole Nazi apparatus responsible for culture.

However, Heidegger also plays on the ambiguity of these terms, which he knows are acceptable to party discourse. The shift from *Führung* to *Führer* is easy. Even the *Entscheidung* can find some protection in Carl Schmitt’s decisionism. Not that Schmitt is exactly a Nazi; he is a political theologian, and in this respect very different from the Nazis and from Heidegger. But he nevertheless belongs to a family of thought that can on occasion support Hitler and that is a branch of European fascist thought. A vast “compromise,” to employ Heidegger’s own term, establishes itself among readings of the crisis, readings that are simultaneously divergent from and related to one another. Heidegger can stretch this compromise to the point of introducing a word that is (as far as I know) absent from *Sein und Zeit*, a word such as *Arbeit* [work] into his political text. The advantage of this word is that it refers to the *Arbeiter* published by Jünger in 1930, which had found an echo in the National Socialist party ideology of the *workers*. Jacques Derrida, in *Of Spirit*, has meticulously demonstrated how the term *Geist* [spirit], a term present in *Sein und Zeit* as well as in the political texts, was taken from a certain theological and poetic source that was shielded from deconstruction. When the rector takes his place on the podium, deconstruction seems to have to supplement itself, to take on some additional ballast, be it by employing doublespeak or by borrowing from Schmitt and Jünger or by the “forgetting” of deconstruction.

Thus, in Heidegger’s “Nazi” engagement there is at the same time an intrinsic consistency with the existential-ontological thought of *Sein und Zeit*, and an inconsistency. This inconsistency consists in missing the deconstructive task of thought in various ways. This failing is not a minor

one: it affects a major thought and allows it to accommodate itself to a totalitarian politics that was already known, at the time, to be criminal. It is, however, not the most serious charge that has to be made in the dossier of the Heidegger affair.

VIII

In this dossier, the most serious charge is written on blank pages: Heidegger's stubborn silence on the extermination. It is much more embarrassing, for those who consider his thought to be radical, than any failures of deconstruction, than what remains unthought, than the “supplements” required by political *Agieren* [enacting]. For unlike those lapses, this silence will not let itself be deconstructed; it calls into question the import of Heideggerian deconstruction itself.

This blank, which extends over some forty years (from *Kristallnacht* to the philosopher's death), is in my opinion the consequence of the exclusionary fashion in which thought “installs itself” in philosophy, that is, in the Greek heritage.

I am taking the word *installation* from Lacoue-Labarthe, who attempts to use it as a translation of *Stellung*. Heidegger identifies a Platonic *Stellung* that, after the pre-Socratics, circumscribes the space of European thought within metaphysical closure: henceforth it will only be a matter of thinking being.³ The forgetting of Being becomes constitutive of Western philosophy.

I think that Heidegger's silence is due to another *Stellung* [enframing], another *closure*, and another forgetting: the exclusion of what I have called the event of the Covenant, the forgetting of a silent Law that takes the soul hostage and forces it to bear witness to the violent obligation it has undergone. One can attempt to rid oneself of this thematic of the Just (as one might seek to rid oneself of a vestige of theology) and of the ethics that accompanies it. Heidegger's reading of the *Critique of Practical Reason* in 1930 is an example of this elimination or exclusion: from the Kantian text of the law and obligation, the author of *Sein und Zeit* extracts only a commentary on freedom. Where Kant emphasizes the suffering and the violence that any finite will endures by virtue of being seized by an inexplicable and empty but inevitable prescription, Heidegger in *On the Essence of Truth* (also 1930) produces freedom “as in-sistant ek-sistence of *Dasein*...of the originary essence of truth, of the sign of the mystery of erring.” Texts like these set the seal on Heidegger's deafness to a problematic of justice. This deafness governs his silence on great injustice, on Auschwitz. As far as the truth of Being is concerned, the *Shoah* is only a being.

And this ignorance will perpetuate itself, perhaps even more blinded, after the *Kehre*. From 1934 and 1935 onward, by way of a rereading of Hölderlin

and Nietzsche, the *Kehre* will divert Heideggerian thought from the themes of *Geschick* [destiny] and *Entscheidung* [decision] toward those of shelter and of listening to Being in the work of art. Living as a poet on one's native soil is certainly not waiting, in the desert of the diaspora, for the last of the Just to come. If one is wholly Greek, and only Greek, above all preSocratic and hence also prepolitical, one has no motive to pay attention, *Achtung*, to the extermination.

If Heidegger is at *fault*, as Lacoue-Labarthe says, and if this fault is not simply a flaw in the rigor of thought, it cannot be assessed on the basis of an existential-ontological or poetic-deconstructive "installation." This installation forgets that the Forgotten is not (only) Being, but the Law. The difference that is incessantly forgotten is not only ontico-ontological, there is also the difference between good and evil, between justice and tort, no less elusive than ontico-ontological difference and, like it, always demanding reinscription. One can never settle accounts with this difference even if one is the most pious of believers. This difference cannot in the least be determined within theological or metaphysical doctrine. It requires the recognition of an immemorial liability. It is this liability, so contrary to its (simultaneously archaic and modernist) ideals of virility, control, and empire, that nazism wanted to exterminate.

IX

I will stop here. The problem I am trying to pass on to you is this: the technoeconomico-scientific megalopolis in which we live (or survive) employs these same ideals of control and saturation of memory, directed toward goals of efficiency.

Unlike nazism, it has no need to have recourse to an aesthetic, ideological, and political mobilization of energies.

Heidegger gave this "new" ontological formation the name *Gestell* [enframing]. There is no question of escaping it. But how to resist it is in question. With what can we resist, if it is not the *Durcharbeitung* [working through]? This *Durcharbeitung* is the absolute opposite of a recollection. We certainly do have to bear witness to the Forgotten in thought, writing, art, and public practice. But the negative lesson that the "forgetting" of the *Shoah* by the great thinker of Being teaches us is that this Forgotten is not primarily Being, but the obligation of justice.

22

The Grip (*Mainmise*) (1990)

I will only make a few observations. I will have, and I would have, difficulty in identifying the place from which they will have been made. This is not, I presume, the place of knowledge of presumed knowledge. For I *know* nothing about what I have to say. Nor do I know anything of this love of knowledge and wisdom with which the Greeks have infected us under the name of philosophy. For it seems to me that I have only ever loved what will not let itself be known or what will not create wisdom in the common way. Perhaps these remarks will not even have been made from a place. In any case, not a named locality. And not a Utopia either. I would prefer to grant it the privilege of the real. Let us leave its name, its label, in suspense.

Manceps

Manceps is the person who takes hold, in the sense of possession or appropriation. And *mancipium* refers to this gesture of taking hold. But it also refers to *that* (it's a neuter word) which is taken hold of by the *manceps*. The slave, that is, designated in terms of the regime of belonging rather than of service. The slave does not belong to itself. Hence it does not have the capacity to appropriate anything at all, either. It is in the hands of another. Dependence is an inadequate term to designate this condition of being seized and held by the hand of the other. It has been the case that adults or self-styled adults have believed that the child could be defined in this way: the one that one holds by the hand. What I have in mind, however, is the following reversal and another tradition: we are held by the grasp of others since childhood, yet our childhood does not cease to exercise its *mancipium* even when we imagine ourselves to be emancipated.

This theme of childhood recurs in the idea or the ideology of emancipation. Born children, our task would be to enter into full possession of ourselves. Master and *possessor*, as Descartes put it, thus insisting on the act of seizure, an act to be carried out on the set of existing things (called nature).

But master and possessor of what *in us*, if we are fully emancipated? Would some childhood remain, after childhood? Something unappropriated after appropriation has carried out its act of seizure so that we have become owners in our own right? Kant defines the Enlightenment as the emergence of mankind from its self-imposed immaturity (“Answering the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’”). If childhood persists after childhood, it is “laziness and cowardice,” he writes, “it is so easy to be immature.” The task of emancipation thus belongs to courage (in the double sense of resistance to fatigue and resistance to fear). To the courage of the very thing that is taken in hand by the *manceps*, and that consequently lacks courage. This banal theme is familiar; it is inherent to the West. It governs the aporias of freedom (one must be free in order to free oneself) and salvation (one must be good in order to redeem oneself from evil and become good).

Roman law had the merit of a cruel clarity: emancipation was in the hands of the *manceps*, in principle. Only the proprietor holds the power to relinquish his property, to transfer it. He who has set his hand upon the other may withdraw it. It is doubtful whether this relinquishing of the grip [*mainmiser*] can be deserved. Who can tell what price the slave must pay in order to free himself? Is there even a common standard of measurement for those who are held and those who are free, a common standard of measurement shared by both the property owner and the expropriated, that would allow the price passing from one condition to the other to be calculated? Can there be emancipation by ransom? Is not the relinquishing of his grip always an act of grace on the part of the *manceps*? Grace, in principle, has no price. Can it even be obtained? Isn’t the slave’s prayer to the master to pardon him from his childhood inherently presumptuous? Does it not already contain the arrogance of a demand? Is it appropriate for someone who does not own himself to formulate a demand as if he were his own property? The exodus of the Hebrews is not the result of the clemency of the king of Egypt, but only of the pain that followed their prosperity. And they only escaped from the pharaoh’s *mancipium* by placing themselves under Yahweh’s.

By childhood, I do not only mean, as the rationalists have it, an age deprived of reason. I mean this condition of being *affected* at a time when we do not have the means—linguistic and representational—to name, identify, reproduce, and recognize what it is that is affecting us. By childhood, I mean the fact that we are born before we are born to ourselves. And thus we are born of others, but also born to others, delivered into the hands of others without any defenses. We are subjected to their *mancipium*, which they themselves do not comprehend. For they are themselves children in their turn, whether fathers or mothers. They do not attain emancipation from their childhood, either from their childhood wound or from the call that has issued from it. Thus they do not know, and they will never know, how they affect us. Not

even if they were to try their hardest. Their very love for their son or their daughter may well turn out to have been a calamity. That is, their love may turn out to have exerted such a grip on the child's soul that it will always remain unknown to the child, even as an adult. It may be the case that the child will be so affected by this grip that it will not occur to the child to rebel, or that the child will not even be granted the grace to beg for release from this grip. I am not only thinking of deep neuroses or of psychoses. For the child, everything is trauma, the wound of a pleasure that is going to be forbidden and withdrawn. The resulting suffering and search for an object, more or less analogous to emancipation, stem from this plague. The flight from Egypt is also called vocation. We have been called by our name to *be* this name, we know not who or what calls us, and we do not know to what we are called. We know only that it is impossible to ignore this call and that fidelity to this requirement cannot be avoided, whatever we do and even if we try to ignore it.

Humanism, whether Christian or secular, can be summed up by this maxim: humanity is something that ought to be freed. There are several different versions of that freedom, the essence of modern philosophy from Augustine to Marx. And the distinction in the West between Christians and secularists is no doubt not absolutely relevant with regard to this freedom, since there is a social and political Christianity that aims to release the creature from the *mancipium* of the temporal powers and there is a spiritual secularism that searches for its internal truth and wisdom, as in late pagan stoicism. But what would constitute liberty itself, the state of emancipation? Innocence, autonomy, or the absence of prejudices? Adamic innocence is not autonomy—quite the contrary. Jacobin autonomy is not innocent. A state of the will is not a state of affection. And the condition of emancipated intelligence, of free thinking, is yet another thing. What matters here is to keep separate the three orders distinguished by Pascalian thought, or the three kinds of judgment isolated by Kant (these are not the same as Pascal's three orders: it is of course the case that along with knowledge and practice there is a third order, that of the heart, in both thinkers; but the heart is dedicated by Pascal to the love of Jesus, by Kant to the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime).

Even so, the modern Western ideal of emancipation mixes all three orders together. Emancipation consists of establishing oneself in the full possession of knowledge, will, and feeling, in *providing oneself* with the rule of knowledge, the law of willing, and the control of the emotions. The emancipated ones are the persons or things that owe nothing to anyone but themselves: Freed from all debts to the other. Denatured, if nature signifies an initial expropriation, a native state of *mancipium*, such as innate ideas, an already spoken destiny, or the “nation.”

For two millennia, in political, epistemic, economic, ethical, technical, and perhaps even poetic thought and practices, modernity has traced its path by criticizing supposed “givens.” The West does not accept gifts. It takes up, elaborates, and gives back to itself whatever is assumed to be given, but it treats the given as only a possible case of the situation (whether political, epistemological, poetic, etc.). Other cases are thus possible. They are conceived and carried out. That is called development or complexification. What was held to be the essence of the situation (political, economic, mathematic, etc.) ceases to be essential. Situational *axiomatics* are installed. This is true not only of geometries, of mechanics, of political constitutions, of jurisdictions, of aesthetics, but also of erotics (Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom*) and of techniques, even of material (so that we speak of the “materiological”).

This “emancipation” is the story of a Faust who didn’t need to sell his soul because one had not been entrusted to him, so he was under no obligation to return it to the donor, nor did he have the power to steal it from its donor. On the other hand, Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* remains an apparent and intentional product of ancient belief: the independent and autonomous constitution of music by Leverkühn or of politics in the Third Reich will have to be paid for with devastation. It incurs the wrath of God, the only *manceps*. Thenceforth, emancipation asserts that it is itself emancipated from the anxiety of conscience that can be the effect of the sin of ontological pride. General opinion holds that mankind has no obligation but to free itself, and that it owes this duty to itself alone. Only thus can we respect ourselves and be worthy of respect. We acknowledge instances of being grasped or seized only in order to deny them. They are thus conceived as cases, represented and treated according to scenarios. One frees oneself from the other by locating it as an exteriority and then taking a grip on it.

The Fable

I am not attempting to draw a distasteful portrait of this long movement that has agitated the West for two millennia (and the human world along with it). I confess that in my darker moments, I imagine what we still call emancipation, what the decision makers call development, as the effect of a process of complexification (called negative entropy in dynamics) that has affected and still affects the small region of the cosmos formed by our sun and its minuscule planet, Earth. Humanity, far from being the author of development, would only be its provisional vehicle and temporarily its most completed form. This process, once it has been started and set to expand, would develop far beyond the capacities of the human brain. The brain, considered as the most complex known aggregate of matter, possesses within its structure and mode of operation capacities for complexification that

have yet to be exploited in the minute of cosmic time one calls human history. And so on, and so on. I will spare you this fable, popular with so many people, and not just the scientists.

This fable has the very emancipated virtue of enforcing no prescription upon the one who hears it, and therefore not requiring to be believed. It does away with the horizon of a call. In order for it to be verified it is enough for humanity to keep alive the will to emancipate itself. The fable “only” says that this will does not belong to humans, is not even a will, nor the obedience to any call, but the mental echo of a necessity resulting from cosmological chance. The fable nevertheless anticipates a contradiction, which we are just beginning to identify: the process of development ends up in contradiction with the human plan of emancipation. We have signs of it in the disastrous effects of the most developed civilizations, effects that motivate the ecology movement, incessant curricular reforms, ethics commissions, the crackdown on drug trafficking. Leaving aside the measures that humanity may employ in an attempt to make development bearable, without, however, bringing it to a halt, one question remains, the only question: Which man, or human, or which element in the human is it that thinks of resisting the grip of development? Is there some instance within us that demands to be emancipated from the necessity of this supposed emancipation? Is this instance, this resistance, necessarily reactive, reactionary, or backward looking? Or is it perhaps the product of a *remainder*, the element that all the memory data banks forget: the uncertain and slow resource, heavy with promise, that immemorial infancy lends to the (art)work, to the (art)work as expression of the desire for the *act of bearing witness*? Is there an ever-present zone of captivity that does not require the remembering and fixing in place of the infantile past, but demands indeterminate and infinite anamnesis?

Mancus

Anyone in the grip of a *manceps* is *mancus*, *manchot*, missing a hand. The one who lacks a hand. Emancipating oneself in these terms means escaping from this state of lack. In freeing himself from the other’s tutelage, the *manchot* takes things in hand once more.¹ He believes that his castration has been healed. This dream that we may put an end to lack is what gives rise to the emancipation of today. The dream of having done with my lack, with what I lack, with what made me lack, what made me have lack. I would make the claim, without defending it here, that the preeminent mode in which lack appears is time, and that time is also, inversely, what requires emancipation in order to put an end to the lack that is time.

Contemporary life attests, by evidence of which the modern tradition is still ignorant, that time is the name of lack and therefore the adversary that must be defeated in order to emancipate oneself. Accelerated transmission, the rush of projects, the saturation of data banks, fascination with what the computer engineer calls “real time,” that is, the near-perfect coincidence (almost at the speed of light) between the event and its reformulation as information (as a document), all bear witness to a convulsive struggle against the *mancipium* of time. Another example, one among many: credit financing performs an analogous function. It lends borrowers the time they don’t have. And they will have to hurry to pay back this time in time. But insurance guarantees that the lender will get this time back, no matter when the borrowers may die. Enough...Does all of “developed” life bring to light this temporal aspect of emancipation *a contrario* (despite itself)? I say *a contrario* because emancipation does not only attempt to loosen the grip of the castrating force of temporal duration, nor that of death as the end of this duration. Emancipation seeks to undo the grip of history itself, the grip of the postponed time of the promise, since there is no history without the promise.

Among the moderns, since Paul and Augustine, the promised emancipation is what orders time as the course of a history or, at least, according to a historicity. For the promise required the undertaking of an educational journey—an emergence from an initially alienated condition toward the horizon of the enjoyment of selfhood or freedom. Thus, duration takes on the directed significance of waiting and working toward this horizon. Duration gave a rhythm to the adventure of trial and announced its end. Pagan Europe had endowed itself with this time in the structure of the Ulyssean cycle. Christian Europe postponed the *dénouement*, the moment of homecoming. The holiness of *being released* (the state of freedom) was put off to a last day, in the future. Release (the act of freeing) became the daily bread of the healthy will, the effort of a sacrifice, which will have its reward. Modern philosophy in its phenomenological, speculative, and hermeneutic forms takes this ethical tension and grafts onto it the eschatology of a knowledge that is also the desire for the emancipation of meaning, permanently at work.

As it shortens the postponements or delays of this emancipation, the contemporary world liberates itself from this horizon of history or historicity in which emancipation was a promise. What do today’s machines lack with their lightning speed? They are built to lack nothing, except lack. They certainly do not know that they are going to die, but I do not believe that this is the essential point of their stupidity or their wickedness. Rather, their essential weakness is that they have not been born. They had no childhood, in the sense I have given it. There is no lack, and thus no history in the sense of the narrative of a promise to be kept, unless we bear the enigma and the wound of a birth that we missed,

our birth. Only when the machines are handicapped [*manchot*] in this way will they be able to think, that is, able to try to free themselves from what has already been thought, before them.

Mancipium

A major uncertainty about childhood, about binding and releasing, governs my thinking. An uncertainty, that is, about the very core of what governs emancipation. Hence this uncertainty concerns the nature of the call and of what calls: the father. Jesus' answer to the question Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? vibrates like an arrow that has hit the target: the little one, the child (Matthew 18:1–5)—*parvulus*, in the Latin of the Vulgate. That is why the child ought not be “offended” [*scandalisé*] (Matthew 18:6). Under the name of *wound*, I have said that this scandal (which Freud called seduction) is inherent to infancy, insofar as childhood is subjected to the *mancipium* of adults (*mancipium* in the double sense: the *mancipium* they exercise over the child and the *manicipium* that their childhood exercises over them, even when they exercise it over the child). Jesus adds, “Woe to the world because of offenses [*scandales*]. For it must need be that offenses [*scandales*] come; but woe to that man by whom the offense [*scandale*] cometh!” (Matthew 18:7).

There are thus two meanings of the word *infancy*: the infancy that is not bound in time and that is the heavenly model of those who do not need to be emancipated, having never been subjected to a grip other than that of the father; and an infancy inevitably subjected to scandal or offense, and thus subject to the abjection of not belonging to the truth of this call. Everything that leads this call astray is scandal or offense: violence, exclusion, humiliation, the seduction (in the original sense)² of the innocent child. He who causes scandal exercises a *mancipium* over the child, which distracts and separates it from the only true *manceps*, the father. This scandal and this distraction are necessary. It is necessary to be *bound*, expropriated, appropriated by humanity, instead of by the father.

There is a principle of seduction, a prince of seduction. The fable of Eden clearly states that this principle is that of sexual difference and that this prince³ is the evil that speaks in woman. To be freed would be to emancipate oneself from the seduction of this woman whom every child has “known” before knowing that it was a woman, his mother. The fable also makes it known that the woman desires the man to forget that he cannot have knowledge. The woman’s desire is for man to set himself up as a rival to the All-Powerful and, at the same time, for man to cease to obey the call of the All-Powerful, that is, to cease to be bound to his *mancipium*. This is the wicked emancipation, the one that the hysterical whispers to her

man: you are not castrated. This emancipation is paid for in suffering, toil, and death. And fratricide.

Things are not that easy, however, neither on the mother's side nor on the father's. On the mother's side, I would draw a parallel (but I am not the first: the comparison is already suggested in Luke 1:7 onward, by the figure of Elizabeth) between Sarah's sterility, the trait that characterizes the mother in the Hebrew tradition, and Mary's virginity in the Christian tradition. These traits are far from being identical, assuredly. Fecundation by the word of Yahweh—Sarah greets it with laughter. That is why the child will be called "He laughed," Isaac. And Sarah will drive Hagar from her house, Hagar her servant whom she had nevertheless given to Abraham when she was barren so that he might have his only son, Ishmael, by her. Laughter of disbelief, and laughter of revenge. Compare this with the simple faith of the Virgin in Luke 1:37 and 1:46, with her smile perhaps. But these two traits lend each a kind of assurance of exemption. I am tempted to say Jewish belatedness and Christian prematurity. The fact of being too late or too early to bear children assures these women, Sarah and Mary, of a kind of exemption from the seductive destiny of mothers. As a result, their sons, Isaac and Jesus, will have little or no experience of the distractions of the maternal *mancipium*. Their mothers will have hardly been women at all.

The trial of binding and release comes to the son from the father himself. It will hardly come as news to you⁴ when I say that each of these elements, binding and release, takes a completely different turn in the Torah and in the New Testament. And by the same token, emancipation, good emancipation, is thought completely differently in each of the two.

In each case, good emancipation for the child consists in meeting the call of the father, in being able to listen to him. It is not a question of freeing oneself from this path one iota. Freeing is opposed to listening. Paul is very clear on this subject, in Romans 6:19 on, when he expresses himself "after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh," and when he writes: "As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Romans 6:19). He also says that the only freedom from death lies in welcoming "the servitude of God," which has "holiness" as its "fruit" and "everlasting life" as its end (Romans 6:22).

As for the Jewish side, it is unnecessary to supply a further gloss on listening, which I would like to call absolute (in the sense that a musician may be said to have an absolute ear), or indeed to expatiate upon the ear that Abraham and Moses lend when they are called by name.

Christians and Jews are in agreement on this point, that emancipation is listening to the true *manceps*, and that modernity breaks this agreement.

Modernity tries to imagine and carry out an emancipation in the absence of any other. This can only appear, in terms of the Scriptures, as weakness and impurity, a recurrence of the Edenic scenario. However, modern emancipation did bring forth a horizon. A horizon of liberty, let us say. Of the liberation of liberty. Yet to the extent that liberty “conquers” itself, as it extends its *mancipium*, its hold, and we get to what I have tried, rather poorly, to identify by the name of postmodernity, this horizon (historicity) disappears in its turn, and it is as if a paganism without Olympus and without pantheon, without *prudentia*, without fear, without grace, without debt and *hopeless* is reconstituting itself. This return of paganism takes place under the aegis of the cosmological rule of development, which is not a testament at all, neither a law nor a faith.

Although Jews and Christians agree on the impossibility, inanity, and abjection of an emancipation without *manceps*, without voice, they are nevertheless profoundly at odds. I would characterize their disagreement as concerning the value that each gives to sacrifice. For present purposes, I took another look at the Epistle to the Romans 2:17 on and the Epistle to the Hebrews. But I also reread Genesis 22, which tells the story of what is called the sacrifice or the holocaust of Isaac. I was struck that Paul, demonstrating the superiority of the new covenant over the old, does not make any allusion to the trial of Abraham (except in Hebrews 11:17, and then only to exalt the faith of the patriarch, which Paul considers as a forerunner of Christ-like faith). Paul attacks the Jewish ritual faith of the annual sacrifice, the arrangement of the temple into two tabernacles, with the second accessible only to the high priest, the sacrificial sovereignty of the Levites, and the Mosaic gesture of spilling the blood “of calves and goats” on the book, on the people, on oneself, and on the tabernacle (Hebrews 9:19–21). But he does not say the thing that seems to me essential to our subject, precisely that Yahweh demands that Abraham sacrifice his son, but prohibits him from carrying it out.

When I say “demand,” I am transcribing poorly. Reinhard Brand, a young theologian and philosopher who learned the square letters of the Hebrew alphabet in the faculty of Hebrew theology at Heidelberg (and homage should be paid to this old city for this fact), and with whom I did some work at Siegen University, has explained to me that the letters in the Torah that name this demand of God have their closest equivalent in German in the verb *versuchen*. This means to make an attempt, to try out, with a suggestion of temptation. Yahweh *tests* Abraham in demanding his son from him, this son that he gave him in a most unusual, even insolent, way, this son who will always provide the Jews with a way to laugh at their own improbability, and perhaps even at Yahweh, the unpronounceable. Yahweh tests, and he renounces, he sends the ram. There will have been no sacrifice

of the child. Only a perpetual threat. The threat that Yahweh might forget to send the ram.

As Georges Steiner ably expresses it in the small volume entitled *Comment taire?*, every Jewish son knows that his father might be called to lead him to the hill henceforth named Adonai-Yerae, which means “God will provide” (rabbinic translation), for him to be sacrificed to Yahweh. And he knows that he cannot be sure that God will provide.

Even so, Yahweh did not take back the son he had given. That is why it is absurd that what the Jews simply call the *Shoah*, the disaster, should be called the holocaust. There is nothing sacrificial in this disaster. The principle that a sacrifice, the sacrifice of the child (which of course Christian anti-Semitism blamed on the Jews), can obtain grace (i.e., the emancipation of souls otherwise destined to internal death) is radically absent from Judaism. All that one can say is that God will provide for emancipation. But God is not foreseeable. He has promised. How the promise will be kept, no one knows. We must scrutinize the letters of the book. Scrutinizing the letter of the book does not just mean observing the rites to the letter, as Paul meanly suggests. Jewish emancipation consists in the pursuit of writing, writing about writing, and writing on the occasion of the event.

These letters are those of a history, of a host of stories. These stories are what we call Jewish jokes [*histoires juives*]. I mean by this that, in the case of the names that are called, the pure signifier (the tetragram, which should make these names into saints by calling out to them) can always end up lacking, end up by signifying something other than what the one who has been called thought that it said. It is this breakdown that makes one laugh. But it can also go so far as to let these names plunge into the horror of what Elie Wiesel has called *the night*. The night of the ear, and the night of meaning. No call can be heard except the call of the kapos, heard when standing for hours in the night.⁵ No sacrifice to the signifier can or ought to hope to obtain a guarantee of redemption from him. One must ceaselessly read and reread the letter that promises redemption. I will borrow a joke from Daniel Sibony, in *La juive* (1983): “A beggar comes into a community in eastern Europe, asking for money to rebuild the synagogue of his village (*his shtetl*) where *everything has been burned*. Moved by this disaster in which the letter and the place were finally *consumed* (although the letter ought to burn without being consumed), the leader of the community gets ready to make a *gift* to him, a rather rare and difficult gesture, when he suddenly thinks of a precautionary measure: ‘Where’s the report of the fire?’ The other’s answer: ‘It got burned along with everything else.’ Of course, the absurdity makes one laugh, but it here goes further, to the limits of laughter: in the very *telling* of this joke there is a *burning*, if the letter that tells it has burnt” (p. 25).

The bond passes around Isaac's body; its "bonding" [*liaison*],⁶ following Sibony's translation of the Hebrew *akedat*, can be undone by Yahweh, thus marking the precariousness of the "bonding," almost encouraging the people of Israel to forget it, encouraging renewed sinning and trial, encouraging rereading and rewriting without end. The letters of the book are both the letters of the stories it tells and the letters that tell the stories of the reading of these stories. The letter burns the letter; there can be no dogma of emancipation in this relation to the evanescent signifier. Dogma means that a matter of opinion, *doxa*, is fixed and established once and for all.

You know more than I do about the new covenant. As Paul explains, it puts faith in the place of the letter. This faith is possible only because the bond with the signifier has been guaranteed "once and for all," a recurring expression in the apostle's Epistles. The father has not asked for the son and has not bound him so as to then release him, he has given his own son as a sacrifice, and he has actually sacrificed him. The letter has been consumed, but the report of the fire (the Passion) did not burn along with it. For the child is reborn and leaves his tomb to come into the *mancipium* of the father. Emancipation through belonging to the father's voice and liberation from the *mancipium* of secular history *did occur*. This emancipation transfigures suffering, humiliation, and death into passion. This transfiguration is *already* emancipation. Here the signifier plays no tricks. He has made himself into bread and wine. Even aesthetics is sanctified, when the flesh receives pardon.

Of course, this confidence in forgiveness can give rise to bad emancipation, to appropriation, to privilege and temporal power. You have been aware of this and you have protested. But it didn't take a "new" New Covenant for Christianity to be emancipated from the grip of the vanities. All that was needed was to unleash the dialectic of works and faith that had been inaugurated by the son's sacrifice and redemption. This dialectic of transfiguration has suffused the thought and politics of secular Europe since the Enlightenment. I do not think that this is the case any longer.

It would be possible to go further in exploring the difference that sets the Christian testament against the Torah by clearing up the question of pardon. This question governs the problems of emancipation directly. It also has a decisive effect on the relation to time, above all to the past. Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Human Condition* that pardon is forgiveness for past actions. Not a forgetting, but a new deal. It would be necessary to examine the relation between pardon and emancipation, to ask who has such an authority over the *res gesta*, over what is finished. And what does this mean for the unfinished past, the past of an infancy that will have been affected without having known it?

23

Europe, the Jews, and the Book (1990)

Unification for Europe also means the unification of its hatreds. Among them, it is essential not to confuse racism or xenophobia with anti-Semitism. These are two different kinds of hatreds. Both can go as far as cold-blooded murder, lynching, arson, the looting of homes, the destruction of community buildings. In setting anti-Semitism apart, there is no question of neglecting, of “swallowing” or letting the almost regular assassination of Maghrebi children, adolescents, or adults in France be forgotten.

The profanation of the tombs and the displaying of a corpse torn out of its coffin on a stake in the Jewish cemetery of Carpentras say something specific: after the *Shoah* the Jews have no right to their dead or to the memory of their dead. There is a long tradition of the profanation of Jewish cemeteries in Europe. The “final solution” martyred and killed millions of Jews for no political reason, but it also made them disappear, and it tried to erase all trace of the annihilation.

My claim is that the Jews represent *something that Europe does not want to or cannot know anything about*. Even when they are dead, it abolishes their memory and refuses them burial in its land. All of this takes place in the unconscious and has no right to speak. When the deed is done in full daylight, Europe is seized for an instant by the horror and the terror of *confronting its own desire*.

Europeans behave like rich relatives toward their poor cousins when dealing with foreign immigrants, especially if they are Europeans. The violence of their passions, their blindness, the many criminal acts are all family matters. All tragedy is a family matter.

But the Jews are not part of the family, although they have been “installed,” as they say, at Carpentras for more than a millennium, and in Prague, Budapest, and Rhenanie for centuries. The Jews are not a nation. They do not speak a language of their own. They have no roots in a *nature*, like the European nations. They claim to have their roots in a book.

Do people have something against books, against their book, against the readers of this book that would lead them to the point of violating Jewish tombs to kill their dead? In principle, not at all. Europe is enlightened; they respect letters and scholars there. In fact, yes. Nothing is as slow, difficult, and unprofitable as learning to read, which is an endless activity. In a society avid for performance, profit, and speed, it is an exercise that has lost its value, along with the institution that trains people for it. Hence the general crisis of education, contempt for teachers, and generalized anti-intellectualism that extends to even the “cultural tasks” of the media. But the fact that the Jews are the “People of the Book” does not for all that explain the profanation of their cemetery.

What does begin to explain it is *what* their book says. For what it says is something that Europe, initially Christian, then republican, now rich and permissive, does not want to know or cannot know. This book, which is at the base of Europe’s whole culture, remains within that culture as excluded from it.

It is an old story. It begins with the Epistles addressed to the Romans and the Hebrews by the Apostle Paul. Forgive my brevity and consequent misrepresentation. The book of the Jews says God is a voice; no one ever gains access to his visible presence. The veil that separates the two parts of the temple, isolating the Holy of Holies, cannot be crossed (except once a year by the priest, chosen by God). Anyone who passes himself off as divine is an impostor: idol, charismatic leader, supreme guide, false prophet, Son of God. The law of justice and peace does not become incarnate. It gives us no example to follow. It gave you a book to read, full of history to be interpreted. Do not try to come to terms with it. You belong to it; it does not belong to you.

However, Paul says that this is not so, that the veil of the temple was torn “once and for all” at the moment when Jesus died on the cross. His sacrifice redeemed your sins “once and for all,” repeats the apostle. The law gave you grace, God gave you his son and the death of his son as a visible example. Through him the voice was made manifest. It said clearly: love each other like brothers.

This was a revolution. It is the beginning of modernity. Christianity is established and spreads by (almost) effortlessly supplanting moribund ancient paganism. But what is to be done with Judaism, with those who cannot manage to believe in the Christ myth, those who nevertheless provided the first book, the ancient law—the fathers, in Europe, of written religion? And what is to be done with a religion that reveals that the veil does not rise?

The whole social, political, religious, and speculative history of Christian Europe bears witness to a permanent undertaking, using various means (inquisition, conversion, expulsion, censorship) to neutralize the Jewish

message and banish the community of unbelievers. Not until the twentieth century will the church revise its position on this matter. Which does not mean that the villages and towns of Europe will follow its teaching...

I am accusing no one. A differend as to the relation to the symbolic—that is, to the law and to death—is at stake. The Christians announce to us that, finally, we are all reconciled brothers. The Jews remind us that we are always sons, blessed but insubmissive. The message of redemption is more pleasant to hear, easier to “exploit” and propagate than the memory of indignity.

But today, after the *Shoah*? Is it not over? It will never end. The Christian churches had introduced the motif of fraternity. The French Revolution extended it, by turning it on its head. We are brothers, not as sons of God but as free and equal citizens. It is not an Other who gives us the law. It is our civic community that does, that obliges, prohibits, permits. That is called emancipation from the Other, and autonomy. Our law opens citizenship to every individual, conditional on respect for republican principles. The Jews are allowed in like anyone else. That is called assimilation.

But how could someone who professes *heteronomy* be transformed into one who exercises *autonomy*? A Christian can manage to reconcile things: the debt to the Other has been paid symbolically, once and for all; autonomy is permitted, within certain limits (these vary from one church to another). But for a Jew, the debt has not been symbolically wiped away, its extinction has only been promised. Redemption does not depend on works or even on intentions. God alone will emancipate.

What then can a “French or German citizen of Israelite profession” be—above all if he is an officer like Dreyfus or a head of government like Blum?¹ In the European unconscious, it is recognized that his debt to the Other will prevail over his duties to the others, to the national community. And that he is bound to be a potential traitor. Unless he forgets himself as Jew. This is the great temptation for the “assimilated” themselves. The “final solution” will come as a monstrous reminder to them that they are always, even *despite themselves*, witnesses to something about which Europe wants to know nothing.

People are surprised that anti-Semitism persists after the “final solution.” But look at contemporary society. It no longer speaks of fraternity at all, whether Christian or republican. It only speaks of the sharing of the wealth and benefits of “development.” Anything is permissible, within the limits of *what is defined* as distributive justice. We owe nothing other than services, and only among ourselves. We are socioeconomic partners in a very large business, that of development. The past has importance only insofar as it is capitalized into powers of all kinds that allow us to hold sway over “the future.” Now that politics is also a discredited profession, it serves only to encourage development by taking care of the redistribution of its effects.

Politics has lost its monopoly on tragedy. So much the worse and so much the better. This will be the case for all of this brave new Europe.

As it rushes forward, what interest can Europe have in the words of the unknown voice in the book of the Jews? What can it make of these obscure stories of law and debt among bands of shepherds, already several millennia old? What can it do with these commandments from another age? The stubborn readers of this book, the witnesses to the Other are no longer even bothersome, but picturesque. A postmodern form of repression: they are made obsolete, they become kitsch. The Jews are just fine, when all is said and done.

Thus the annihilation of what the book of the Jews says continues in the unconscious of a permissive Europe. Thus continues the annihilation of the message that the law does not belong to us and that our reconciliation with it remains pending. This is the constitutive anti-Semitism of a Europe that has, in one way or another, always thought the opposite of this message, has always thought its self-constitution. What is shameful in the profanation of the Carpentras cemetery is, I fear, that it was truly an action from another age. Abject with respect to contemporary “values.” But how do these contemporary “values” relate to the book that the dead of Carpentras used to read?

Part V
Algerians

24

The Name of Algeria

(June 1989)

The journal *Socialism or Barbarism*, in which these articles [chapters 25–34] appeared, was the theoretical mouthpiece of a few militants, workers, employees, and intellectuals who had banded together with the aim of carrying on the Marxist critique of reality, both theoretical and practical, even to its extreme consequences.¹

An act was being repeated. In 1937, Trotsky had founded the Fourth International to fight the Stalinist bureaucracy and the criminal policy that it was imposing on political leaderships and workers' groups throughout the world, from China to Spain. Ten years later, a group of militants from several countries "left" the Fourth International with a negative attitude.

Blinkered by "classist" orthodoxy, Trotsky had not been able to define the class nature of "communist" societies, refusing to see in their bureaucratization the formation of a new exploitative ruling class. Enslaved by an "economism" that is perhaps justified in societies where "youthful" capitalism exploited the work force without restraint, Trotskyism does not profoundly rethink the desire for autonomy (or dis-alienation) that animates workers' struggles in developed capitalist societies. Attached to the principle of "democratic centralism," it learns no lessons from "workers' democracy," from the modes and forms of organization that workers spontaneously invent in their struggles, be they major conflicts or day-to-day resistances. And lastly, Trotskyism does not perform an analysis of the changes that capitalism itself undergoes (by virtue of its own development), even after capitalism has reached the "highest stage" identified by Lenin half a century ago.²

As one can see, there was plenty to be done. The group inherited the entire revolutionary tradition, both theoretical and practical, then in existence, including ideas that came to it from sources other than Trotskyism: Pannekoek's "Workers' Council" movement, the POUM,³ revolutionary Trade Unionism, "Bordigaism,"⁴ workers' opposition, the shop steward movement, the "News and Letters" movement...One thing was clear from this tradition: the workers' movement had been incessantly

defeated over the past century. Some defeats had been heroic, some obscure (that is, insidious). But it was no longer enough to blame these defeats on weakness, on betrayal, on the leadership of the movement, whether reformist or Stalinist. The leitmotif of the traitor or the fool only served to put off the work that had to be done. It kept alive the malaise afflicting emancipation, the malaise that it claimed to denounce. It was necessary to rebuild the framework of ideas governing the emancipation of workers throughout the world from the ground up, while remaining as faithful as possible to what arose from their struggles—in order to give it back to them. (For the inventive quality of the immediate practice of workers' struggles is so common that its value tends to go unnoticed.) That value lies in the fact that this inventiveness is *already* emancipation. And the role of the revolutionary organization is not to direct workers' struggles, but to provide them with the means to deploy the creativity that is at work in them and the means to become aware of that creativity so as to direct themselves.

Today, anyone who describes the group Socialism or Barbarism as having been the hybrid offspring of Parisian intellectuals, whose sole worth lay in not having been too much in error about the nature of either the socialist and communist “left” or the liberal and conservative right during the time of the cold war and decolonization, only perpetuates the very thing against which the group fought. Such a description perpetuates the forgetting of what was actually at stake (this is a common idiocy in historical and sociological studies).

Such an analysis perpetuates the forgetting of what is and remains absolutely true about what was at stake. True even today, when the principle of a radical alternative to capitalist domination (workers' power) *must* be abandoned (something that allows many people, innocent or guilty, to relinquish all resistance and surrender unconditionally to the state of things). This stake, which motivates the carrying on of resistance by other means, on other terrains, and perhaps without goals that can be clearly defined, has always been, and remains, the *intractable* [*intraitable*].

A system can be as exhaustively provided as possible with information, with memory, with anticipatory and defensive mechanisms, even with openness toward events—the idea that guided Socialism or Barbarism was ultimately, even if it was expressed in other terms, the idea that there is something within that system that it cannot, in principle, *deal with* [traiter]. Something that a system must, by virtue of its nature, overlook. And if history, especially modern history, is not simply a tale of development, the result of an automatic process of selection by trial and error, this is because “something intractable” is hidden and remains lodged at the secret heart of

everything that fits into the system, something that cannot fail to make things happen in it [*d'y faire événement*].

Under the names of “inventiveness,” “creativity,” self-government,” along with a principle of autonomy already present in the actuality of the class struggle (names and a principle that could at times give rise, and that have given rise, to spontaneist or anarchist political organization), Socialism or Barbarism identified, I believe, the secret from which all resistance draws its energy. It identified that secret in the hope that by showing the motive of their resistance (actually inexpressible) to those who resist, the group would help them to remain faithful to this motive, help them to not let themselves be robbed of it under the pretext that it is necessary to organize oneself in order to resist.

If the group’s existence, over some twenty years, was itself extremely turbulent, this was certainly not because of conflicts over status or personal interests—as is the rule, or so it seems, in the Parisian intelligentsia. Just as there is an ethics of psychoanalysis to be respected, so the group respected the ethics of political anamnesis. Controversies, resignations, and splits all took place over how to understand the struggle that was taking place and how to take part in it. This was the turbulence of an interminable cure, where the past of the revolutionary tradition was at work, but in the daily laceration of modern life. Nothing less academic. It was indispensable to reread texts and actions, in sum, to prepare the Acts of the Workers’ Movement, but this work was worthless unless it was directed by an open attention, a free-floating attention,⁵ to living contemporary struggle, in which the intractable continued to show itself.

There was plenty of “work,” as there is for the patient in analysis. As much as possible the group entered into these struggles. It was not “like a fish in water”⁶ (because, after all, water only serves the fish for its survival, as the masses serve the party apparatus). Rather, it was like mind and memory bending in the face of free associations, bending before them the better to reflect them. For a long time, the group respected the ascesis of self-effacement in order to give the workers the opportunity to speak. The group only appeared on what is called the political stage in 1968, when the student government foregrounded some of the motives that had been animated by Socialism or Barbarism.

I have recalled this situation (in my fashion and under my sole responsibility) only in order to underline how much these writings about Algeria are indebted to Socialism or Barbarism. The signatory would have been completely incapable of writing them had it not been for the education that he received from the group (in both the tradition and in an attention to what I have already mentioned) and had not everything that he wrote

on the issue been submitted to the merciless and sincere criticism of comrades.

In recognizing this obvious debt, I hope also to make today's reader understand why my picture of the Algerians' war is so unlike the one that appears in the memoirs, log books, and chronicles (good or bad) in which people bear witness to their experience of the "Algerian War." My picture is only sketched with difficulty, only corrects itself from moment to moment over seven years, on the basis of the thought and practice of the group. And these texts are certainly those of a combatant, but one who is neither French nor Algerian, but internationalist. Had I been a conscript or a *fellagha*, that would not have changed any aspect, I am sure, of what this picture, in all revolutionary probity, should have been.

It was my lot, as it was of many others (which was something that was discussed in the group), to lend practical "support" to the militants of the FLN [National Liberation Front] in France at the very same time that I was making theoretical criticisms of the organization in the journal. I did not find it necessary to adjust my diagnosis to fit in with my practice, nor did I desire to give up the latter because of the former. It was just, we told ourselves, for the Algerians to enforce the proclamation of their name upon the world; it was indispensable to criticize the class nature of the independent society that their struggle was preparing to bring about. This intimate differend *should* remain unresolved, unless we wish to lend credence to the false and dangerous idea that history marches at the same pace everywhere, in the Aures⁷ and at Billancourt,⁸ or unless we wish, even more stupidly, to count on the peasants of the Third World to revolutionize the industrialized societies.

But I have also remembered my debt to the group for another reason. By placing our struggle under the sign of a fidelity to the intractable, I mean that the "work" we did can and must be continued, even when everything indicates that Marxism is finished with as a revolutionary perspective (and doubtless every truly revolutionary perspective is finished with), when the intractable voice or the voice of the intractable is no longer heard in Western societies on the social and political wavelengths. The radicality of Socialism or Barbarism, if one were to be faithful to its form, would remain a dead letter under present conditions.

Fidelity does not consist in maintaining the revolutionary tradition at any cost when the intractable has fallen silent in the realm in which it has spoken for over a century, that is, in the realm of social and political struggles. I am not claiming that one should cease to take an interest in that realm. Rather, those struggles no longer demand "work," this work of spirit, of body and soul, that was required in order to hear them and take part in them only thirty years ago. It seems to me that they do not demand anything more than intellectual, ethical, and civic probity.

This does not mean that the system has digested the intractable. It has assimilated everything that could be the legacy of the social and political struggles of the oppressed for over a century. In our own backyard, one has only to consider how the great impulses of 1968, which made young people build barricades and spread strikes to the point where the system broke down, in order for them to make these impulses felt, are now “well understood,” almost obvious, and, by virtue of that very fact, unrecognizable.

Even in the article of 1960 included here, the suspicion of a significant part of the group appears, the suspicion that the political was ceasing or would cease to be the privileged site in which the intractable appeared. We spoke of a “depoliticization.” It was on account of this that the group split up.

From this political crisis, which subsequently became even more evident, I preserve only one belief: that it is inaccurate and intellectually dishonest to impose the hope that, as Marxists, we should only invest in the revolutionary activity of the industrial proletariat, upon the freely spontaneous activities of such as young people, immigrants, women, homosexuals, prisoners, or the people of the Third World. This is not to say that these activities are negligible. But thought must yield to the evidence that the grand narratives of emancipation, beginning (or ending) with “ours,” that of radical Marxism, have lost their intelligibility and their substance.

The presumption of the moderns, of Christianity, Enlightenment, Marxism, has always been that another voice is stifled in the discourse of “reality” and that it is a question of putting a true hero (the creature of God, the reasonable citizen, or the enfranchised proletarian) back in his position as subject, wrongfully usurped by the imposter. What we called “depoliticization” twenty-five years ago was in fact the announcement of the erasure of this great figure of the alternative, and at the same time, that of the great founding legitimacies. This is more or less what I have tried to designate, clumsily, by the term “postmodern.”

The task that remains is to work out a conception and a practice completely different from the ones that inspired “classical” modernity. To read—just the latter, even subtly, to the present state of things would only be to mint and distribute counterfeit coin. Certainly, something of the intractable persists in the present system, but it is not possible to locate and support its expressions or signs in the same areas of the community and with the same means as those of half a century ago.

I would like to be able to honor the name of Algeria in a manner suitable to the sentiment that links me to it. It would be quite a singular anamnesis.

Who could be interested in my little story? A free ascent toward smells and sights, the sound of a poor and ancient wisdom in the city, a sharp light on the slopes, on the unquestionable ridges, the eruptions here and there of an endemic violence, of anguish, and a few names. I am thinking of Constantine⁹ between 1950 and 1952.

I owe Constantine a picture of what it was for me then, when I arrived from the Sorbonne to teach in its high school. But with what colors should I paint what astonished me, that is, the immensity of the injustice? An entire people, from a great civilization, wronged, humiliated, denied their identity.

My few names, Bouziane, Champeaux, Souyri, Harbi, come to me from the institution where this aporia reached boiling point: the school.

The French Republic contrived to burden a few young Algerians with a borrowed culture while their own culture, that of their people—its language, its space, its time—had been and continued to be devastated by a century of French occupation.

Constantine suddenly caught me in this intense complication, and it kept me at a distance. What inner weight did this severe city have that made me quickly put myself at the service of its people?

*The War of the Algerians*¹⁰ is written to this city, perhaps without my knowledge. It is the correspondence of a lover. From a distance, the lover confesses his jealousy of everything that deceives or will deceive the loved one. He admires the loved one, he encourages the loved one. He complains, knowing the loved one will not meet the fate that courage and beauty deserve.

When the group Socialism or Barbarism gave me responsibility for the Algerian section in 1955, Algeria did not name a “question” of revolutionary politics for me, it was also the name of a debt. I owed and I owe my awakening, *tout court*, to Constantine. The differend showed itself with such a sharpness that the consolations then common among my peers (vague reformism, pious Stalinism, futile leftism) were denied to me. This humiliated people, once risen up, would not compromise. But at the same time, they did not have the means of achieving what is called liberty.

Almost all the companions of that time are dead today, and dead because of this differend. Mohammed Ramdani, still an Algerian student, comes to tell me that I must publicly offer to them what is rightfully theirs.¹¹ The debt will not be paid off for all that. At least testimony will have been made to this intractability that, at one time, bore the name of Algeria, and that endures.

25

The Situation in North Africa (1956)

Tunisia: in January 1952, riots at Bizerta and Ferryville are bloodily put down and a general strike is called.

Morocco: in December 1952, riots in Casablanca; in August, throughout the country. Proclamation of the internal autonomy of Tunisia in July 1954, independence of Morocco in March 1956.

Indochina: Battle of Dien Bien Phu from February to May 1954; French forces evacuate Hanoi on October 9, 1954, and the whole of North Vietnam in mid-May 1955.

In Algeria the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the Army of National Liberation (ALN) unleash on November 1, 1954, the “uprising” that is their declaration of war. On April 2, 1955, the French Chamber of Deputies passes the law declaring a state of emergency in Algeria. The elections of January 1956 are postponed in Algerian provinces. In the metropole, they are won by the Republican Front of Mendès-France. Mollet is made president of the Council of Ministers. He is welcomed in Algeria, where Lacoste is the resident minister, on February 6, 1955, by tomato-throwing crowds. On March 12, the council accords special powers for the government of Algeria.

The most obvious significance of the events in North Africa since 1952 is that of a new phase in the decay of French imperialism. To clarify this particular meaning, it would be necessary to show how and why the French bourgeoisie has shown itself generally incapable of preserving its colonial “empire” since the Second World War. Here I only want to note the essential elements of the recent history of the Maghreb: on the one hand, why the national-democratic objective of *independence* has constituted, and still constitutes in part, a platform capable of bringing together all the “popular” forces from the middle bourgeoisie to the agricultural subproletariat. On the other hand, I want to examine what perspectives of struggle are opened up once states and their apparatuses of repression have or will have been handed over by the colonists to their “valid interlocutors.”

The conspicuous fact is, in effect, that the imperialist political apparatus has *broken down* in the three countries of the Maghreb since 1954, and has *given way* in Tunisia and Morocco. From the perspective of the global struggle of the proletariat, this fact is apparently of limited significance: a mere shift in the regime of exploitation. However, it is of crucial significance in relation to the conditions of overexploitation of the North African proletariat and must be immediately taken into account. I will then go on to consider which class will seize or has already seized control of the administrative organs that ensure exploitation, in order to ask what line the revolutionary movement ought to take, after we have defined the structure of power.

The Colonists Take a Step Backward

Why is there, why has there been, fighting “with bombs and revolvers” since 1952¹ in North Africa? For independence at most, at the least for internal autonomy. The right to self-determination is the common denominator of the MTLD, the Néo-Destour, and the Istiqlal.² Leaving aside Jacobin phraseology, a concrete objective remains: to end the colonists’ control of the administrative and repressive apparatus, at least in its internal functioning. Thus, the discussions of the Franco-Tunisian conventions only ran into “serious difficulties” when tackling the essential elements of this apparatus: the municipal and central administrations, the police, the army. Indeed, the agreements concerning these points have already been called into question: Bourguiba [leader of independent Tunisia] wants a little bit of an army. The problem will soon be as pressing in Morocco.

Why did the struggle of the Maghrebi peoples occur in this domain and with such unanimity? Because the organization of the administrative and repressive mechanisms assumes considerably greater importance in North Africa than in technologically advanced countries. In short, in the Maghreb the police perform an essential *economic and social* role. The nature of their role must be understood in light of the brutally reactionary character of French colonialism in these countries.

Is North Africa an outlet for French manufactured goods? Yes, of course.³ Manufactured goods in general constitute 54 percent of its imports.⁴ But the absolute volume of these imports remains very low in relation to the population: manufactured goods find an outlet only in the privileged stratum of the colonists and the top administrators and in the semiprivileged stratum of the salaried “aristocracy,” and this stratum is very thin. It is clear that an effective imperialist policy, whether it is “neocolonialist” or “progressive,” must aim at developing an outlet for manufactured goods through large-scale investments, industrialization, and the creation of a middle class and a

“modern” proletariat with increased buying power. In short, an effective imperialist policy necessitates the constitution of a market.

Yet capital investment is very weak: the Commission of Investments calculated the value of the annual investment per inhabitant in 1954 at 9,400 francs⁵ for Algeria, at 8,700 for Morocco, at 5,500 for Tunisia (versus 54,900 francs for France).⁶ Public investment is notoriously lacking: for example, North Africa is insufficiently provided with energy. As for private investment, it is directed toward the commercial, financial, or insurance sectors rather than toward industry.⁷ In this sphere, the interest of the French cartels coincides with that of the colonists: both seek to maintain the North African economy in a preindustrial state. If agriculture were industrialized, writes the director of agriculture to the government of Algeria, the fellahs would become agricultural wage earners: “Is it really in our interest to proletarianize future elements of the population, *when social stability presumes an inverse development?*”⁸ The direct occupation and direct rule of the Maghreb by France, whether as fact or as tendency, allows France to seal off these territories against all “foreign interference,” that is, against any capitalist investment that might weaken “social stability.”

But does this situation only call for economic agreements? Far from it. Among the traditional functions of the colony in the imperialist system, the only one that North Africa fulfills effectively is that of agricultural and mining production.⁹ This function requires the appropriation of the means of agricultural and mining production to the greatest extent possible. “Social stability” rests, then, on the radical expropriation of 18 million Muslims by 1.5 million Europeans. In Algeria, of the 4.5 million hectares actually cultivated, 2 million belong to the Europeans, and precisely 1.5 million to 7,000 colonists.¹⁰ The ratio of European to Muslim property ownership seems less discriminatory in Tunisia and in Morocco, but this apparent lack of discrimination arises only because imperialism consolidated the power of Muslim feudal lords in those countries. The result is the same for the fellah. Since the worst lands are left to the “natives,” the poor soil combined with small landholdings make 70 percent of Muslim farms economically unviable.¹¹ The formidable mass of peasant smallholders¹² and expropriated peasants¹³ cannot find employment either in industry¹⁴ or on the large farms¹⁵ because of mechanization. The fate of the North African peasantry is henceforth clear: it dies of hunger. And this is not just an image.¹⁶ Permanent scarcity, permanent unemployment, permanent emigration, even without taking periodic famines into account. India has nothing on the Maghreb.

This ragged subproletariat exerts a formidable pressure on the pay scale. The average *annual* income of an Algerian peasant is 20,000 francs, and that of an industrial worker 100,000. The average Algerian industrial wage is a third of the minimum industrial wage in France: neither the agricultural wage

earner nor the independent worker is entitled to Algerian family benefits, and in 1953 only 143,000 workers were registered on welfare!¹⁷ In 1951, the daily wage of the seasonal workers in the vineyards of the Constantinois ranged between 200 and 250 francs in return for eight, ten, and sometimes twelve hours of work. And there were still Tunisian peasants crossing the border who would accept 180 francs.

Such a level of exploitation of labor ultimately provides companies with unbeatable profit margins,¹⁸ and this is the real meaning of “social stability.” I cite these figures only so as to gain agreement, without further demonstration of the essential economic and social role played by the administrative apparatus: you do not create 70 percent profit margins innocently; you extract those profits from millions of dispossessed workers in the shape of sweat and death.

You have to take precautions; you interpose bribed or bribable bosses, administrators who are careful not to administer, cops, even occasional legionnaires, who employ the double-bottomed jars of Berber myths as their ballot boxes, the bloody bric-a-brac of a society where exploitation can no longer be discreet. You do not only seize the means of production; you also crudely sabotage the means of understanding—paying off the Muslim clerics, propagating illiteracy, outlawing the mother tongue, humiliating.

The entire daily life of almost all Muslims is thus taken over and ground down by the handful of colonists: Maghrebi society is a totalitarian society, where exploitation presupposes terror. And since class frontiers are almost exactly homologous with “ethnic” frontiers, class consciousness is impossible: a person is crushed for being an Algerian or a Tunisian as much as for being a worker or a peasant. The cop who clubs or who tortures is European, the boss or the foreman is European, the officer is European, the professor is European: scorn is European and misery is “Arab.” Therefore, the struggle situates itself immediately at the national level; it spontaneously seeks to suppress the apparatus of state terror where oppression takes on its most obvious shape and independence. That is to say, the suppression of the apparatus of state terror appears to be a counter to exploitation.

In reality, there is no other alternative to exploitation than socialism; in reality, the national-democratic struggle of the North African people contains within it the seeds of a new mode of exploitation. But for all that the subjective and objective content of the goal of independence must not be underestimated. Its aim subjectively expresses the maximum possible consciousness for a proletariat ground down by material and moral terror; it crystallizes the meaning of a rediscovered dignity. Objectively, the conquest of national “independence” forces the colonists to take a step backward, to abandon the terrorist apparatus that was the precondition for overexploitation; in this way it creates a revolutionary situation characterized by power sharing:

economic power to the colonists, political power to the “nationalists”; within this situation the problem of property ownership has to be faced.

We in France can therefore do nothing other than support this struggle in its extreme consequences. Contrary to the totality of the “left,” our concern is in no way the preservation of the “French presence in the Maghreb.” We are unconditionally opposed to all imperialism, French included. We are unconditionally hostile to the pursuits of terror.

The “Valid Interlocutors” Take a Step Forward

There remains the question of which line to take in the dominated country. In order to establish this line, it is necessary to specify whether the “valid interlocutors” are actually valid, whether the “qualified representatives” of the Maghreb peoples are qualified by anyone other than themselves or the French bourgeoisie.

First it is necessary to point out that this question cannot be answered in the same way for the three North African countries. Each is characterized by differences in economic and social structure. In Algeria, expropriation was so pervasive and colonial administration so direct that there was practically no place left for the development of a Muslim bourgeoisie: shopkeepers and intellectuals, the only representatives of a well-to-do Arab class, are completely marginalized by the administrative apparatus, and their economic role is limited to mercantile capitalism. In Tunisia and above all in Morocco, on the contrary, there exists a Muslim bourgeoisie that occupies a more prominent position in economic life: the old preimperialist mercantile bourgeoisie and some elements of the agrarian feudal system were enriched in the interests of the protectorate, and the capital accumulated by them in agriculture or foreign trade was partially reinvested in industry. Consequently, in the protectorates, the conditions exist for domination by the local bourgeoisie. These particularities of development are explained by the respective dates of French expansion: Algeria was invaded by a dying aristocracy and occupied for a long time merely for the benefit of commercial companies who contented themselves with controlling the ports. Tunisia and Morocco were, on the contrary, the indispensable “cures” for a capitalism that was undergoing its first great imperialist crisis.

Yet these structural differences show through in the present nationalist movements: Tunisia and Morocco have produced parties with a specifically bourgeois leadership and program. In contrast, their Algerian equivalent, the UDMA, is a very weak party, while the Etoile nord-africaine, the first nucleus of the present MTLD, originated among the Algerian workers who had emigrated to France.¹⁹ Of course, the social content of these parties is not as simple as it may seem: we have demonstrated that their ideology brings

together an entire “people,” which means that they contain social contradictions. But the nationalist platform, specific to a bourgeoisie seeking to constitute and monopolize a domestic market, proved sufficient in Morocco and Tunisia to group together all the social forces, and the best proof of this is the expansion of the left-wing nationalist parties since the last world war: the creation of the Destourian UGTT after 1945 and the infiltration of the Moroccan Trade Union Congress by the militants of the Istiqlal in 1948. The division of forces between Muslim bourgeoisie and proletariat favors the UGTT, largely owing to the support given by the colonists to the bourgeoisie in its struggle against Stalinist unionism. From this it is clear that even if the European oligarchy agrees to relinquish a part of the state apparatus to the Tunisian and Moroccan nationalists, it is because the Europeans know that this bourgeoisie is sufficiently differentiated as a propertied class to preserve the conditions for an “honest” exploitation. The rate of profit will perhaps fall from 70 percent to 40 percent, but that fall is tolerable, even prudent, and the oligarchy will end up convincing itself that it has succeeded. For its part, the “enlightened” French bourgeoisie seeks to bring about such a turn of events in Morocco, just as it has in Tunisia.

There can be no negotiations in Algeria, however, because “it is France.” In reality, it is well known that there are no valid interlocutors in Algeria—that is, a local bourgeoisie already capable of having arms distributed to the underground forces (as in Tunisia) and of diverting the attention of the peasantry and proletariat away from land sharing, by one means or another. The peculiarity of the Algerian independence movement is evident in the splitting of the MTLD in the summer of 1954 into a “collaborationist” faction and an “intransigent” faction. The disarray of the party’s base after the rupture favored a regrouping under the auspices of the activists of the CRUA, and the absence of a central workers’ organization directly controlled by a bourgeois party, along with the cooperation of the nationalists with the Stalinists at the heart of the Algerian and French CGT, lent further specificity to the Algerian situation. The Chamber of Deputies’ successive and apparently contradictory votes on Moroccan and Algerian policy are explained by the awareness of the French bourgeoisie of the fact that it cannot depend on any local bourgeoisie in Algeria. As a result, the Algerian problem is the problem of a power vacuum.

The French Communist party solves this problem in familiar terms: “Some will not fail to claim that there are no valid interlocutors in Algeria in order to try to disguise their hostility to all negotiation. If one truly wanted discussions with the Algerian people, it would be easy to find interlocutors who are capable of speaking in its name” (*L’Humanité*, July 30, 1955). And Duclos develops the thesis that the “shrewd” Gilles Martinet had already elaborated in *L’Observateur*: “loyal elections.” More cautious than our

progressives, Duclos requires some preliminary guarantees: basically an end to the repression, the release of detainees, and the suppression of mixed local councils. These are the very same conditions set by the leaders of the National Liberation Front and the National Liberation Army, through the mouth of Barrat's interlocutor (*L'Observateur*, September 15, 1955). But what point of view do these conditions represent? Insofar as the elected representatives are to negotiate with the French government they represent "the new ties that will unite Algeria and France." As for the Stalinists, they address the reformists (through the authorized voice of Maurice Thorez) in the following terms: "Have we not already shown that we support a policy of negotiation with the peoples of North Africa for the creation of a true 'Union française'?" (*L'Humanité*, November 5, 1955).

Stalinists thus objectively take the position of a "very enlightened" bourgeoisie on the Algerian question. Why? First, because they have little support in Algeria: "about twenty officials, appointed by the French Communist party, who have no real influence over the Algerian masses" (a fellah leader, *L'Observateur*, September 15, 1955). This is the case in all of North Africa, so that their only hope for expansion in the Maghreb lies in France. Second, because the chances of American imperialism in an "independent" North Africa are currently much greater than those of the Russian bureaucracy. By keeping the French bourgeoisie there in one way or another, the French Communist party protects the future possibility of a Stalinist imperialism, already prefigured in the Near East. Its support of the FLN is thus a formality, and for the rest, the Algerian Communist party has always been uncertain about the underground resistance forces. In this matter, the colonists did the Communist party a service in lumping them together with the MTLD.

The question that remains to be asked is that of the social content of the National Liberation Army. Recruitment is easy among the unemployed. But who are the leaders? The recent study undertaken by Delmas in *Combat*, a study that is a monument to dishonesty, concludes that they are "nihilist" bandits sent from Cairo by religious fanatics. This is a well-known refrain. There is only one conclusion to be drawn from the material Delmas cites: that the fellah cadres are in effect hostile to the two older factions of the MTLD and to all "Bourguibist" attempts to make a "valid interlocutor" out of Messali.²⁰ Why such hostility? Apparently, the underground resistance hopes to assume the role of valid interlocutor, which Barrat's interlocutor confirms elsewhere, but the French bourgeoisie, for whom Delmas faithfully interprets, does not intend to negotiate with the leaders of the underground forces and would prefer negotiation with a broad-minded politician. The bourgeoisie looks for such a politician in the person of Messali or anyone else. Yet there is no bourgeoisie in Algeria strong enough to support a Bourguiba. One can

conclude that negotiation has no future, even with all the "popular fronts" one might wish for in France. The development of the situation will essentially be determined by the underground resistance forces and one may expect, in the absence of all proletarian consciousness, the evolution of an embryonic military and political bureaucracy, which the scattered elements of the Muslim commercial and intellectual stratum will likely join.

Elsewhere, the situation has not stabilized in either Morocco or Tunisia. In the case of Morocco, the incapacity of the Destourian bourgeoisie to resolve social problems leads the former fellahs to support Salah ben Youssef; in Tunisia, the underground fighters of the Rif, supported by El Fassi, have not disarmed since the return of the sultan. In effect, it is evident, on the one hand, that bourgeois nationalism alone is fundamentally incapable of redistributing land in accordance with the hopes of the peasantry and that the concept of independence runs up or is going to run up against the immediate necessity of resorting to the kind offices of America or the Soviet Union for investment; and on the other hand, it is clear that the workers' movement in the North African countries, even if it did away with its bourgeois leadership, would not be in a position to set socialist objectives in the short term. Under such conditions, the growth of conflicts seems inevitable, conflicts between privileged factions who will make themselves into the mirror image of imperialist greed and conflicts between the new masters and the exploited, on whose side all those dissatisfied with the dominant policy will stand.

In North Africa, like anywhere else except even more intensely, the task of rigorous ideological clarification presents itself. We must recognize the possible revolutionary impact of a struggle for independence. It is also necessary, however, to know how to denounce the aims of nationalist leaders who, under cover of this struggle, seek to impose an indigenous ruling class as new exploiters. To this end, the nationalist leaders will have to integrate themselves into one of the imperialist blocks, be it American or Russian. Lastly, it is important to understand and to make it understood that the only solutions (the solutions that none in the struggle can provide) are class solutions, the first of these being the direct appropriation of the land by the peasantry.

26

The North African Bourgeoisie (1957)

Mollet's policy is carried out. Franco-British offensive launched against the Suez canal (nationalized by Nasser) in autumn 1956 (while Khrushchev is "pacifying" Budapest). In October 1956, interception of the Moroccan airplane carrying five "historical leaders" of the FLN, among whom is Ben Bella. They are interned in France. In January 1957, Massu is given full powers to maintain order in Algiers. The "Battle of Algiers" begins.

General embarrassment of Maghreb neighbor states

The hour of truth has come in Morocco.¹ Is not the Moroccan bourgeoisie publicly accusing its proletariat of being “the cause of the morass in which it flounders?”: “Remember, dear compatriots, that we needed all our courage and all our faith in our future, as well as all our love for our venerable sovereign, in order to accept cheerfully the month-long strikes that had such profound repercussions on commerce and industry.” And President Bekkai, author of these pious words, added with a realist despair, “Billions of unpaid drafts block our bank tellers’ windows, tens of billions have fled our country.” With a spontaneity that deserves admiration, the young Moroccan bourgeoisie has been able to adopt the paternal and vaguely ogrelike tone of the ruling classes in the face of worker agitation. At the same time, it has thrown aside the mask of national unity at the moment when it was most needed; the Moroccan workers are in no hurry to take up their role in the nationalist drama once more, to judge from the number of exhortations to “calm” and the appeals to “maturity” with which they are graced daily. Even if President Bekkai no longer accepts the strikes “cheerfully,” it is by no means certain that the tenderness that the workers have for him will preserve him from further woes.

The economic crisis comes as no surprise. The French still own 90 percent of private investments in the Moroccan economy. It is clear that since the

return of the sultan (for the most farsighted, even since his exile), the profits drawn from this capital have not been reinvested: they disappeared to Tangiers, France, and Switzerland, or they were used for speculative ends, or they were even purely and simply hoarded. On the other hand, the French government suspended its financial aid until the signing of conventions giving it sufficient guarantees. Now the Moroccan budget is evidently in deficit: the metropolitan contribution alone allowed it to be just about balanced at the time of the Protectorate. Moreover, the peasants, having shown their tax collectors the door in the person of the *caids*,² demonstrate a regrettable tendency to ignore Rabat's fiscal administration. How to balance the budget? asks the very orthodox Bekkai government. Its solution: tax electricity and gasoline.

Just as Napoleon III "lost his revolutionary wits [*sel*] by taxing salt [*sel*]" so too Bekkai loses his nationalist essence by taxing gasoline [*l'essence*]. Since trucks are the mode of transportation in Morocco, a 68 percent tax on gasoline and the tax on electricity are enough to double consumer prices. The capacity of the domestic market, already remarkably weak, shrinks a little further. The small firms close; the unemployed—more than 100,000 in the region of Casablanca alone—begin to besiege the municipalities. The workers who are employed strike in order to obtain wage increases. This is when the strict Bekkai raises his voice in order to demand "orderly work, peace, and the security of property and persons." Failing this, he threatens to resign, along with his coalition ministry.

At any rate, the ministerial coalition has already been effectively dissolved, like the National Front in the countryside. The Bekkai government was made up of an artful balance of Istiqlal, PDI [Democratic Party of Independence], and independent ministers. Since everyone is "independent" in one way or another, and since the labels continue to serve to identify individuals (because the programs of each party—that is to say, of each "personality"—remain prudently evasive) and since secularism, interventionism, monarchism, and republicanism, "Westernism" and "Easternism," have already changed camps several times, it would be too risky to describe the parties in the government in terms of their social orientation. However, the crisis, as we have said, reveals their true faces a little more each day: the majority of the ministers, Istiqlal, PDI, or independent, are dyed-in-the-wool liberals. This includes those bloodthirsty terrorists—such as Balafrej, who so conveniently calmed the fears of the international capital sheltered in Tangiers—that the French Residence has tended to put into solitary confinement over the past few years. This majority is flanked on its right by a few representatives of the Arab *caids* (the few who are not too compromised with the French) led by the *caid* Lyoussi, former minister of the interior, currently minister of state and promoter of the antiparty cause in the mountains and in the south. Finally, Bouabid (Istiqlal) represents, on the left, the faction of the party that controls

the Moroccan Trade Union Movement: he is the “progressive” of the team. This colossus moves along, tripping over its own feet, under His Majesty’s leadership.

Credit must be granted to the monarch’s perspicacity in that this singular hodgepodge reflects the social reality of Morocco pretty accurately. The combined development³ of this country effectively juxtaposes a precapitalist rural society (with its tribal organization almost entirely intact, thanks to the care of the French administration) with the nucleus of a capitalist economy sowing the seeds of a modern proletariat in the ports, in the mines, and in a few factories. Roughly, the concrete problem for the Moroccan bourgeoisie consists in destroying the Arab aristocracy without letting itself be devoured by the workers. It must struggle on the two fronts, and the reproach it makes to Bekkai through the voice of the Istiqlal is that he struggles only on one front, against the workers. In fact, the agrarian aristocracy has already taken the offensive under Lyoussi’s leadership, with the help (disavowed but objectively effective) of certain colonialist groups and the official support of Abd el-Krim; here again, a singular collaboration that will no doubt enlighten the Moroccan workers. If the Arab *caïds* go on the attack (under the royal banner, as they should, like everyone else), it is because they are particularly threatened not only by the present situation, but by historical development itself.

The birth of the Moroccan nation means in effect the death of the lords of the hinterland [*bled*]. These aristocrats, whose title to nobility often does not go back any further than to Lyautey, underwent a slow death at the hands of the very people who had raised them to power. Imperialist penetration objectively implied the condemnation to death of the very tribal and patriarchal organization that the imperialist administration had subjectively maintained. The ever more artificial preservation of traditional social structures constrained the fellahs (two-thirds of the Moroccan population) to a catastrophic agrarian practice: lands divided in the extreme by the customs of inheritance, limited use of water according to the ancestral rites, tools as tragically pathetic as their landholdings, exhaustion of the land by repeated subsistence crops, and so forth. This picturesque “Berber” civilization, which, in the absence of any “Berbers,” was of interest only to the Arab aristocracy, not only killed the peasants like flies, not only filled the shantytowns with an immense proletariat in rags, it also prevented the development of the urban economy, precipitated the crisis, and made the agricultural barons, who profited from this state of things, still more intolerable to the peasantry. There was no domestic market, and there still isn’t one: the countryside “lives,” if one may put it that way, almost on the margins of the monetary economy. Imperialism accepted this situation: it spec-ulated on the sale of lands, of buildings, on adjudications, on changes, it shot or deported the malcontents.

But breaking the deadlock of the French political apparatus required nothing less than the unleashing of the force of the exasperated peasants by the Moroccan bourgeoisie. The Istiqlal penetrated the countryside by exploiting this anger, accelerating the deterioration of the tribal community and its replacement by the nationalist, or at least dynastic, ideal. There are 600,000 members of the UTM [Moroccan Workers' Union]: half are rural, proof of this transformation. Another proof: many tribes expelled their lords. The king sent new lords to rule them in the name of the nation. But these were sometimes the same individuals after a facelift, and at any rate they had to put an end to the "disorder," so they persecuted the rural cells of the Istiqlal, opening undeclared hostilities. What would the peasants do?

Lyoussi prepares his response: what they have always done, that is, what their *caids* always made them do—take up arms and enter the cities in order to impose the will of the hinterland, that is to say, of their lords. This Juin of independent Morocco launches "his" peasants against the cities of the bourgeois and the workers, in order to impose on the king the monarchy he desires, a feudal state.

A wasted effort, at least if our view of the situation in the countryside is correct. For even if the peasants are incapable of organizing their force themselves, their aspirations push them in a direction that is contrary to the one that Lyoussi wants to impose on them. The peasants will do nothing on their own, save banditry, but one cannot make them do just anything. In reality, the question of the democratic revolution is asked, if not in their heads (this is unlikely) at least in their deeds.

And here we return to the old issue of permanent revolution: this revolution whose preconditions arose in the countryside, and that should allow the bourgeoisie to constitute the domestic market it requires in order to consolidate itself; is the bourgeoisie itself incapable of making it, as Trotsky thought? In struggling on the two fronts, is the Moroccan bourgeoisie destined to failure? Is it true that "for backward countries the road to democracy passes through the dictatorship of the proletariat"?

Without wanting to resolve the question in general, one can at least show that in this case it is a false problem. The Moroccan proletariat is absolutely not ready to construct its own dictatorship. It is numerous, of course, but assessing revolutionary forces is not a matter of bookkeeping. Bookkeeping is not what counts. What counts is that the proletariat does not have a clear consciousness of its own objectives or of its capacities. This working class is not socialist and has not yet produced an avant-garde. It has barely begun to disentangle itself from the nationalist rags in which the Moroccan bourgeoisie disguised it during the resistance. Indeed, the workers did not wait for Bekkai's reprimand to notice that a Moroccan owner faced with a strike differed little

from a French owner. Certainly, the Istiqlal leaders tried to persist in the “nation against nation” line, to divert the workers’ fight against the *présence française*, the French army, the French borders, the French police; yet it is still the case that the dissatisfaction of the *medinas* is directed against *all* tight-fisted employers, against *all* speculators, against *all* cops. This said, the 200,000 to 300,000 workers scattered throughout Moroccan cities are not, however, concentrated in large firms where the direct contact of each individual with the whole would be constant. In fact, the discussions are carried out in the Istiqlal cells, and the exchanges are always controlled, oriented by the Istiqlal leaders—the same ones the workers find again in the trade union: for the UTM is to the Istiqlal what the CGT is to the French Communist party. What’s more, the owner of the small company where they work, for the most part, is himself Istiqlal, has resistance credentials, knows how to talk, disarms them. In these conditions, the development of class consciousness is powerfully hindered by the class that does not want a consciousness. This is why the bourgeoisie “of the left” can develop this line: we will carry out industrialization together against the *caïds*, the colonists, and the right wingers.

Is this possible? If workers’ dictatorship is impossible, does the same apply to the bourgeois dictatorship? The program currently developed by the bourgeois “left” calls for nothing less than a Jacobin dictatorship. All traces of imperialism—army, police, administration, and so forth—must be liquidated; the Algerian struggle must be entirely supported; the domestic enemy (colonialists and feudal bosses) must be destroyed, expropriated, and its goods redistributed. The realization of this program requires a unified leadership, which the Istiqlal claims to offer, but it is not a very strong one on account of its internal heterogeneity. Does this line provide the means to finance industrialization? Certainly not. Allal el Fassi estimates that the Five-Year Plan can be secured with 600 billion francs. On their side, the liberals think that 200 billion a year is needed. Where to find the funds? It is possible that France will lend 30 billion once the conventions have been signed. For the rest, offers of help will not be lacking, in the East and the West. But what guarantees will capital require in exchange? The “right” is ready to slow down the struggle against the feudal lords and imperialism in order to appease backers: but then it condemns itself as a merely local bourgeoisie. This is something that the “left” understands well, which is why it wants on the contrary to show the moneylenders a strong Moroccan bourgeoisie, that is, to pursue the nationalist struggle first of all. But it would have to draw support from the peasantry, to shape it, to radicalize it; and it is aware of the risks of such an operation. Did not Allal el Fassi recently declare, “Today we are in the countryside in the presence of a force similar in all points to the Chinese force”? Doubtless he only wanted to make the right-wingers and the liberals tremble a little, but he probably succeeded in frightening himself, to judge

from the recent softening of his attitude concerning the problem of the ministry. It is because the bourgeoisie would itself fall by the wayside along the road to a peasant revolution: it is too tied to the landed aristocracy. And, at any rate, it would rather not find in the countryside the means of forming a rural bourgeoisie; a peasant revolution is not a matter of sharing out farms, but rather of collectivizing them.

Nothing further remains to the Moroccan bourgeoisie than to unify itself around a centrist program implying: (1) slowing down and then blocking the course of revolution in the countryside under the control of the sultan's administrators, possibly with the backing of the old underground fighters during the transition period; (2) appeasing the workers' opposition through a moderate reformism; and (3) setting in motion a plan of investment whose major lines have already been proposed to the sultan by Moroccan businessmen and for which Anglo-Saxon capital will provide the necessary nourishment. The palace has practiced this centrism systematically since the return of Mohammed ben Youssef. As his son says, the sultan "is the only person who can resolve these problems, for he is above all political tendencies." The alibi of the *caïds* against the bourgeoisie, the alibi of the imperialists against the peasants and the workers, the alibi of the imperialists against the Moroccan laborers, but the idol of the peasants, this polymorphic Moroccan de Gaulle has not yet succeeded in developing his role for the workers: he lacks the plebeian demagoguery of a Thorez that would actually get them to roll up their sleeves. But, on the other hand, there will soon be plenty of miniature Moroccan Thorezes to do the job: already the Stalinists have entered individually into the UTM, have decided to stick there at all costs. They will soon cry "Long live the king!" by way of a dialectic.

In Tunis, which is a future Rabat, Bourguiba had power over the center for a long time. Once Ben Amar's coalition government, a prefiguration of Bekkai's, had proved its incapacity, Bourguiba entered into the arena and did his centrist act, expelling the ultras and putting down social agitation. The French press applauds, and *L'Express* makes him its "man of the week." "The Tunisian government guarantees the preservation of the goods and private enterprises of French property owners," notes Article 29 of the economic convention. By the following articles, the same government refrains from tampering with the legal system regulating land or with French or mostly French companies. And Bourguiba, very reassuring, confirms: "It is not a question of extending agrarian reform to the big companies" (*France-Observateur*, August 30, 1956). The commercial exchanges guarantee preferential treatment for French products entering Tunisia. That's definitely what they call a "valid interlocutor."

But half of the workers are entirely unemployed. In order to stop the pillage, Bourguiba has bread distributed in place of land. The consequences are well known: capital must be found. Bourguiba prefers French capital. Why? Because this uncertain, braggart, and cowardly Mediterranean capitalism is the least dangerous of the international lenders. But above all because this same capitalism encounters several setbacks in Algeria that are, in part, Bourguiba's setbacks, too. The small calculation of this great man is in effect to interpose himself between the FLN and Guy Mollet in order to implant Bourguibism in Algeria: he knows very well that prolonging the Algerian struggle diminishes the mediocre prospects of an already rather weak liberal bourgeoisie grabbing power. These prospects increased a little when Ferrat Abbas rallied to the FLN: the professionals of nationalism were perhaps going to dismantle the military and political apparatus formed in the underground forces. Bourguiba immediately recognized this qualified representative as his double. However, the internal struggles are not over yet in the FLN. It is not clear who will carry the day. But Bourguiba knows that in shortening the fighting he improves the prospects of Abbas and his peers along with his own prospects.

Arbiter of a conciliatory conference, not only would he have won his first diplomatic victory and spread his prestige all the way to Rabat, not only could he speak more strongly in order to obtain better financial conditions from Paris and elsewhere, but he would end up with Algerian and French weaponry, he would obtain the departure of the French troops stationed in Tunisia, and above all he would make the Algerian underground resistance fighters give way. They would hang their weapons back on the rack, which would greatly relieve our mediator.

Why? Because the Algerian underground forces did not forget that at the moment when they formed themselves, the Néo-Destour on its side abandoned the armed struggle for negotiation. One remembers Ben Bella's phrase: "The vigilance of the combatants will nip Bourguibism in the bud in Algeria." It is now Bourguiba's vigilance that would very much like to kill what he calls "extremism" in Algeria. To bring two parties to negotiate is to bring to the fore the men who know how to speak, the intelligentsia, globetrotters for the cause. Emigration returns control of the domestic resistance to these men, outflanking the cadres of the military organization.

But what is the basis of the conflict between Bourguiba and the Algerian cadres of the FLN? A clash of personalities? Certainly, but what else is there at stake? In order to judge, one must put oneself in the situation prior to November 1, 1954: the procrastination of the MTLD leadership and the conflicts between Messali and the "centrists" had convinced some of the rank and file that the established leadership was incapable of seeing the national struggle through to a conclusion. For a long time, Bourguiba was

the hated symbol of conciliatory leadership for these elements, who trained the cadres of the underground forces. Perhaps Bourguiba no longer has exactly this meaning in their eyes, now that he has won “independence.” But at any rate, the reconciliation of the FLN’s men with the former nationalist leadership can only be achieved through the integration of those leaders into the Frontist organization, as Abbas showed in falling in behind the Front.

Does this hostility have a social basis? There is no doubt that the equivalents of Balafréj or Bourguiba, members of the classical liberal bourgeoisie, had lost the leadership of Algeria by the end of 1954.

Bourguiba wants to give that leadership back to the Algerian bourgeoisie: it is true that the moment of French exhaustion, which will favor this, is drawing near. But this little runt of a bourgeoisie, the outdated product of the period of direct administration, does not represent a social force. If Bourguiba fails, he could end up with several hundred kilometers of common borders with an unpalatable regime, namely, a politicomilitary apparatus that will carry out a few spectacular acts of nationalization and a rather more headstrong agrarian reform than that practiced in Tunisia. This regime would be much more capable than the lifeless Destour government of carrying the masses along by demagogic, because it would give the masses the feeling, both illusory and authentic, of participating directly in the struggle for “independence.” There is no reason to doubt that Nasser’s example will not be contagious when the objective conditions of this “solution” are provided. The Destour would then fear suffering the fate of the Egyptian Wafd.

I do not want to say that tomorrow Ben Bella will be Algeria’s Nasser. I only want to say that the question of the nature of power hangs in the balance in Algeria in a way that it never did in Tunisia or Morocco, that the transformation of the class struggle through the consolidation of a military regime would be capable of reactivating this very struggle in the neighboring countries, that such is the fear that motivates the ultracentrist and entirely conciliatory policies that Bourguiba is presently carrying out.

Meanwhile, he Westernizes the Tunisian family, school, and constitution, while the workers begin to expect that one might de-Westernize capital a little. But the Néo-Destour will not bother with capital any more than the Istiqlal. And the UTM will no more radicalize itself than the UGTT did: its reformism is only the social face of Bourguibism.

Half measures, reconciliation, reforms: as soon as the class struggle emerges from the nationalist swamp in the “backward” countries, new ruling classes seek to stick it back there once more. But they cannot hinder their very efforts from demystifying the workers little by little and leading them finally to envisage the struggle in the light of their own interests.

27

A New Phase in the Algerian Question

(1957)

Despite the French delegate's opposition, the United Nations General Assembly puts the Algerian question on the agenda.

The French and the English withdraw from Port Said.

On January 28, 1957, the FLN [Algerian National Liberation Front] orders a general strike.

Here I simply want to take stock of a situation that is developing very rapidly by emphasizing the striking results produced by the developing contradictions of the Algerian situation over the past year.¹

In the International Sphere

The Algerian problem was internationalized *in fact* and *as a problem* during the last UN debate and the vote on the final resolution. Thus, the French bourgeoisie could not completely stifle the noise made by the boots of half a million of its soldiers in search of “a handful of terrorists.” But the FLN [Algerian National Liberation Front] did not obtain the condemnation of France. This failure—all relative, for it is correct to think that the Front does not want UN mediation—is as much due to the USSR as to the United States.

Soviet “Moderation”

The position of the Soviet bloc on the Algerian question remains unchanged for the time being: it explains the persistent inactivity of the French Communist party in the metropolitan sphere. The Soviets want to keep Algeria as much as possible in the sphere of French economic, political, and cultural domination, in order to improve the prospects of the Algerian branch of the French Communist party. Moscow and the Central Committee of Paris have not yet differed on these points: rapprochement with the SFIO, reluctance to

support the Algerian armed resistance since November 1954, systematic sabotage of the struggle against the war in Algeria within the French working class (all the non-Stalinist militants who tried to organize this struggle ran up against the maneuvers of the local secretaries).

But as the Algerian conflict intensifies, the Algerian communists have undergone still more repression, which produces the effect of linking them with the nationalists, hardly the effect envisaged by those who carry out the repression. The French Communist party certainly watches repression work for it without displeasure: the death and torture inflicted on the Algerian militants assure the Algerian Communist party a place in the martyrology of the future Algerian Republic, and the wavering, opportunist, and adventurist line it currently follows leaves open the way to a reversal of policy, if the conflict of the blocs flares up again on an international scale and if the Communist party passes into resolute opposition in France.

Consequently, the tactics of the Communist party and of Moscow are dictated by international relations, current moderation being able to give way at any time to an energetic resumption of propaganda against the "dirty war."

American "Support"

The French "left" seemed disappointed with the support provided by the United States to Pineau: it seemed to hope that the Suez "blunders" would be penalized by the Americans in the UN. Apparently, nothing of the kind occurred. This is because the disintegration of the Western block since Suez had reached the limit of what was permissible. The apparent contradictions between French and American interests in the Middle East had to be stifled, and American diplomacy gave "loyal" support to the French delegation. But it is already certain that this shameless rescue was bought at the cost of a French promise to find a quick solution.

Now that the division is almost completed in Asia, the Middle East and Africa as a whole appear more and more to American imperialism as an extremely important stake in the struggle for world domination. American imperialism seems set upon taking the place of Franco-English imperialism wherever the latter does not manage to abandon the old forms of colonial domination, in the new structures imposed by recently emancipated nations. Such is the case in Algeria. It is superfluous to enumerate all the political, economic, strategic, and diplomatic advantages Yankee capitalism thinks it can draw from the political "independence" of the North African countries.

Consequently, the support given by the United States to France during the UN debate ought to be interpreted more as a respite than as a victory of the *thèse française*. The means of United States pressure on France, in a moment when it is threatened with financial, economic, and social crisis, are sufficient for the prospect of a settlement of the Algerian question to begin to appear.

Insofar as it joins in the process of the political emancipation of the countries of the Middle East and Africa, and insofar as its outcome directly or indirectly determines access to the African market, the Algerian conflict begins to assume an international significance that it did not have in the beginning. It seems that the more and more pressing greed of competing imperialisms ought to have led French capitalism, in one way or another and through many contradictions, to seek actively the outcome most beneficial to its own interests. This task, overwhelming enough given the abilities of present or future French governments, is nonetheless facilitated by an appreciable modification of the Algerian situation itself.

In the Algerian Sphere

Occurring in one year, this change seems to be characterized by the deepening and the acceleration of the process of national unification. This new element seems to favor the preconditions for a future settlement. It is advisable to view the progress of the national movement among the urban classes and in the countryside separately.

The FLN and the Urban Classes

Significance of the Strike. The strike at the end of January expressed the massive adherence of the different Muslim urban classes to the nationalist idea. It touched, on the one hand, all the wage earners (domestics, blue- and white-collar workers in the private and public sectors, functionaries, teachers, etc.) and, on the other hand, the shopkeepers and artisans—consequently, the quasi totality of the Muslim population of the cities. The deployment of the forces of repression was such (the expeditionary corps back from Suez surrounded Algiers) that the adherence of these social categories to the national liberation movement could only show itself negatively by the pure and simple abandonment of all collective life. The wage earners and the shopkeepers broke this minimum of solidarity that, *in fact*, links people, even within a torn society, and that extends, *in fact*, the gesture of a baker, a dock worker, or an administrator to the status of a social activity. Thus the repressive apparatus was, at the beginning of the strike, *isolated* from social reality; it appeared as a massive organization but nevertheless as lacking weight. In

abandoning their function, the Muslim workers performed (on a lesser scale, but in the same way as the Hungarian workers) the most radical critique of the state there is. They concretely revealed its abstraction.

But a dictator without a popular arm to twist resembles a paranoid. The repressive apparatus, abandoned by social reality, reconstructed the scenario of an imaginary “reality”: one by one, with trucks loaded with machine guns and blaring Arab music (the supreme psychological ruse of our specialists of the Muslim soul), they went to drive workers, schoolchildren, petty officials, primary-school teachers out of their homes. They put them in their place. Then the proconsul came down from the palace, walked a few paces surrounded by guards in the rue Michelet, and had the goodness to judge this scenario convincing.

The Resistance and the Shopkeepers. But let us leave the little king to his logical delirium. In reality, from now on the Front appears to be present in the commercial petite bourgeoisie under the form of the Union générale des commerçants algériens [Algerian shopkeepers’ union], and in the working class thanks to the Algerian trade union movement. The strike demonstrated the scope and the efficacy of the Frontists’ penetration work within these two classes that, even a year ago, were relatively marginalized in what was principally a peasant movement.

The Front’s consolidation among the shopkeepers should be explicable in terms of this class’s complete lack of organization, until now the defenseless prey of the right-wing masters of the Algerian chambers of commerce who monopolize the wholesale trade and to the little racists of the Algerian Poujadist movement, lovers of pogroms. It seems that the excesses of the European wholesale trade, perpetrated by the Poujadist shopkeepers, have unleashed an antimonopolist and nationalistic reflex among the Muslim (and sometimes Jewish) shopkeepers.

Penetration into the Working Class. Nationalist penetration into the working class is a new fact. Of course, Messali’s MTLD was a nationalist movement essentially based on the working class, principally the migrants in France. But it had never managed to produce a precise analysis of Algerian Muslim society: starting from the observation that the Muslim bourgeoisie and middle class had not developed, and that there “exists a vast and very extensive backdrop: the masses,” it entitled itself “mass party” after having concluded that “in reality there are no distinct social classes in Algeria” and that, from the social viewpoint, “the country taken as a whole does not display class antagonism” (second MTLD National Congress, April 1953). This assessment, somewhat amazing and no doubt explicable in terms of the situation of the movement before the beginning of the armed struggle, made the MTLD into a monolithic and doctrineless organization, incapable, for example, of proposing any agrarian reform to the peasants.

In an inverse movement, the Front, which seems aware of the objectives specific to different social classes, seeks to coordinate and control the action of each one of them through unions (workers, shopkeepers, students). It was in the framework of this strategy that the UGTA [workers' union] first saw the light of day. The latest strike seems to show that it practically eliminated the CGT [French trade union] as a workers' organization with a grip on the Muslim masses in Algeria. The CGT was characterized by a European union leadership that at times lapsed into paternalism and that was always subject to the fluctuations of the French organization as a result of the preeminence within it of an aristocracy of workers (railway workers and functionaries) that was at times fascistic, and thanks to the limitation of its objective to wage claims, though with a few fairly crude Stalinist maneuvers thrown in. The new central organization seeks, on the contrary, to draw support from the agricultural workers, dock workers, and miners and to mobilize them in view of clearly nationalist as well as social objectives. It overtly claims the same role for itself as the Tunisian UFT or the Moroccan UT [workers' union] during the struggle for independence in both those countries. The Front thus seeks to support the struggle of the peasant battalions of the ALN [Algerian National Liberation Army] by means of the social struggle of the workers' organizations and to extend the sabotage of the colonial economy from the farms to workshops, mines, and ports.

If we consider the conditions of absolute secrecy imposed by repression on this development of the Frontist undertaking, we can only conclude that in one year it has made very appreciable progress. The Front has incorporated new social classes into the national struggle; it has increased the number of organizers; it has disseminated its ideology right into the ranks of manual and intellectual laborers and shopkeepers; it has won over the cities that had previously been isolated from all contact with the peasant resistance by the army. The crystallization of the formation of the nation has thus appreciably accelerated, while the training of the staff of the future administration of the nation has continued.

The FLN Apparatus

This last feature, which is parallel to the one that we just examined, constitutes another aspect of the deepening of the process of nation formation.

Even a year ago, the relatively extreme weakness of the Muslim petite bourgeoisie appreciably separated the Algerian situation from that of Morocco or Tunisia. The leadership of the underground forces was not yet sufficiently technically or socially consolidated to be able to guarantee a ceasefire or a "reasonable" agrarian reform to any French negotiators. The

armed struggle in particular was still largely a dispersed and relatively spontaneous guerrilla affair; it mobilized the reserves of anger of the miserable and unemployed peasants to local ends. It was not a matter of a "jacquerie"² that could be put down by force; rather, it always appeared to be part of an irreversible process. But the organization directing the armed struggle and the social content of the underground forces were both still extremely fluid, strictly subordinated to the local conditions and without coordinated political objectives.

Military Consolidation. Now, however, all the facts that can be determined, in spite of the censorship of Algiers, reveal considerable progress in the military and political organization of the Algerian resistance. The ALN has extended its operational field across the entire territory of Algeria; it has organized its structure of military command into provinces, zones, regions, sectors; each military territory seems entrusted to a leadership tightly controlled by the politicians; military ranks have been instituted along with a system of remuneration. To this nucleus of full-time soldiers there have been added partisans who take up arms or return to civilian life according to the requirements and the prospects of the local situation. It seems, therefore, that the systematization accomplished by the forces of repression has been accompanied, or one should perhaps say preceded, by the systematization carried out by the Algerian resistance.

Political and Administrative Consolidation. A taking up of political and administrative authority consolidates this military implantation. The political commissioners establish select committees in the villages charged with organizing the Frontist cells. The watchword is this: the armed struggle is all important; the objective is the politicizing of the countryside on the ideological basis of national independence and agrarian reform (land redistribution). This political penetration tends to take the form of a working administration, coexisting with or replacing the French administration. The success of this takeover seems proved by the dissolution of all old administrative structures, from the Algerian Assembly to the official *djemaas* by way of the mixed communes: the small faction of feudal lords and Muslim bourgeoisie that still collaborated with the French administration a year ago have been physically and politically eliminated, in such a way that the power of a prefect's decrees does not seem to exceed the range of his escort's submachine guns. The divorcing of the administrative apparatus from social reality, which was so striking in the cities during the latest strike, seems almost always to be the case in the countryside. It seems that the aim of the Front is already to constitute "popular assemblies" in all the villages, embryos of future town councils over which it would maintain tight control

by monopolizing the presidency of these assemblies. The conditions of secrecy in which these new steps are being taken are extremely favorable to an effective infiltration.

The Function of the Middle Classes in this Consolidation. It is obvious that this work of setting up a military, political, and administrative apparatus throughout Algerian territory required the Front to control the most economically well off and culturally most developed Muslim classes. The desertion of the universities, the high schools, and the junior schools by the student population (which, as in all the colonized countries, makes up a significant percentage of the total population) made available a large number of young intellectuals; they constituted a precious resource for the Front, first because their level of education is much higher than that of the peasant masses, next because their very youth makes them absolutely unmoved by the seductions of collaboration with the French administration. On the other hand, the middle class of Muslim shopkeepers, most of whom rallied to the resistance, fund it whatever happens (funds that must be added to the taxes levied from the European farmers and property owners).

Characteristics Peculiar to the Front. The support of the weak commercial and intellectual middle class for the nationalist movement, which is explained by the fact that this class cannot develop within the colonial structure, has led to the setting up of an unusual politicomilitary apparatus. This apparatus is characterized by the training of the peasant masses (fellahs, tenant farmers, and agricultural workers) at the hands of the most enlightened and the most entrapped elements of a numerically very weak petit bourgeois strata. These elements bring with them their specific psychology: on the one hand, “rationalism,” a taste for organization, a belief in the importance of the cadres, and a tendency to centralism; on the other, populism, a sincere dedication to the cause of the miserable masses, and an authentic sense of participation in their ordeal. This psychology expresses itself both negatively and positively at the level of its nationalist ideology.

Negatively first, in that the great majority of this social group are absolutely devoid of religious fanaticism and reactionary pan-Arabism: They were educated in the French schools and know Descartes better than the Koran (nothing is here for praise or blame). They do not want to destroy either peasant religiosity or the “brotherhoods”; they are ready to take religion into account but only in terms of a progressive appropriation of the “totalitarian” character of Islamic practice. They are no less ready to struggle against the Muslim clerics, who have sold out to the French administration,

and they sometimes pride themselves already on knowing not to spare the clerics' lives, even in the mosques.

The Frontist ideology displays this psychology in its positive aspects as well: it is revolutionary in its own historical context, which means bourgeois in ours; it wants to share the lands because it cannot for the time being imagine any other solution to agrarian poverty; it wants to achieve political democracy because it cannot imagine that the "people" might find a way to express its will other than in the institutional framework that French legalism taught it.

Consequently, the "poverty" of the Frontist program is a poverty for us; it is not a poverty in itself, and it is above all not the manifestation of a conscious Machiavellianism that would deliberately entertain vagueness concerning its ultimate intentions the better to impose its "solution" later on.

However, compared to this ideology full of good intentions and devoid of positive analysis (but can one ask the bourgeoisie to make the critical analysis of the bourgeois revolution?), the most extreme intransigence arises with regard to the organization's discipline: a rigorous exclusivism with respect to political representation, a centralism that is only barely democratic concerning the circulation of information and instructions.

As far as exclusivism is concerned, it is a result of the historic situation of the Algerian parties before November 1954: it put an end to the Algerian Communist party's game of switching sides, to the wait and see policy of the MTLD and the UDMA, to the inaction of the *ulémas*.³ The Front now became, in fact, the only apparatus capable of regrouping the militants who had left the old groupings and of incorporating many individuals outside the organizations. At this point, its line is that of the single party, and the armed struggle, along with the need for secrecy, favors this exclusivism.

As for centralism, it came out of the very conditions of the struggle: the Front was at first a military organization; the subordination of all its activity to the need to support the National Liberation Army and the partisans brought with it the necessity of a single and all-powerful leadership. For more than two years, this leadership has not been controlled by the masses; the masses, on the contrary, have been influenced by its propaganda and its actions. To this must be added the fact that the cadres stemming from the petite bourgeoisie who have incorporated themselves into the Front over the past year will only, because of a level of education that sets them apart from the peasants, accentuate the tendency to unbridled centralism.

Now this apparatus, *single* and *centralized*, is pushed by the logic of development to root itself more and more solidly in the countryside and in the cities, and to control more and more narrowly the totality of Muslim society. It will tend henceforth to take in hand the administration of the country. That means that *the Front is already preparing itself for the role of*

the administrative stratum of Algerian society and that it is objectively working to bring about a confusion between the present organization and the future state.

It is still too early to know whether, once the conflict is ended, the apparatus will incorporate itself and wither away in a “democratic” kind of state or whether, on the contrary, it will swallow up the state to bring about in the end a new example of the “strong regimes” produced in young nations politically emancipated from colonialist tutelage. At any rate, the problem is already posed in the facts.

Prospects. The profound internal modification of the resistance that we have just described transforms the overall significance of the Algerian conflict. From now on, the Frontist organization constitutes for the French government an indisputable interlocutor capable of imposing a cease-fire in all areas, capable of slowing down if necessary the peasant movement of land redistribution: in short, capable of safeguarding the interests and the lives of the Europeans during a transitional phase. It is only by crude trickery that the powers that be in Paris and Algiers could claim to be carrying out a mere police operation in Algeria. Even if the form of the conflict is apparently little changed, its content has toppled: it is no longer a matter of liquidating bandits or of pacifying wayward populations, but of scoring points with an eye to the eventual negotiations; such is the direction of the fighting that from now on *imposes itself*, willy-nilly, on both camps. One must moreover note in passing the idiocy of the double bind in which the present French government has left itself: either it pursues the war, which accelerates the rise of the Front to power, or it fulfills its declared intentions, and the nature of the control exercised by the Front over the masses assures the latter success in the event of free elections.

If, finally, the international causes that we invoked earlier, which militate in favor of a settlement of the question, are taken into account, it seems possible to conclude that the Algerian affair has entered into a new phase whose import is the end of the armed conflict.

This judgment does not mean that we should expect an armistice in the near future. First of all, it is impossible to give sufficient weight to the lack of intelligence from which the French bourgeoisie has suffered since the end of the last world war, in particular with regard to the administration of its colonial interests. It has labored so assiduously at its own downfall that one would be disinclined to believe that history is a rational process, were it not that one knows that even the insanity of a class henceforth no less dominated than dominant remains rational. It can carry on sending draftees to their deaths for a while longer, the better to put Ben Bella in power in Algiers. Or again, the peculiar characteristics of the Frontists’ organization and ideology, either

their exclusivism and centralism or their embryonic social program and “radical” nationalism, which are matters for “solution,” might scare off the French leaders. They might not give up hope of suppressing or alleviating them through a war of attrition or by feints (straw men, etc.). The moment of reckoning would then be put off until later.

One cannot deny the existence of these and other hindrances to a cease-fire. But in the last instance, they can only deepen the process of the formation of the Algerian nation and bring about, through multiple contradictions, the birth of an authority that will have the power to stop the conflict.

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Algerian Contradictions Exposed (1958)

On November 6, 1957, Felix Gaillard becomes president of the Council of Ministers. On January 11, 1958, near the Tunisian border, a French unit is heavily engaged by a detachment of the ALN. On February 8, Sakhiet Sisi Youssef, a Tunisian frontier village, is destroyed by a French air raid.

The Sakhiet massacre has brought into broad daylight the fact that the multiple internal contradictions of the Algerian situation have grown considerably deeper since last summer.

On the one hand, power structures have changed within the National Liberation Front following the recapture of the cities by the French army and police: the link between the resistance and the Europeans, which had been maintained up to that point by the fence-sitting Muslim bourgeoisie and French “liberals” in Algiers, has been broken. Consequently, the bourgeois political-military apparatus of the Front has devoted all its efforts to the consolidation of the peasant army. During this phase, all Bourguibist overtures have become impossible, both because the French government, intoxicated by its “successes,” is not interested in negotiation and because the young peasantry that has swelled the ranks of the ALN constitutes a deeply intransigent political force. Sakhiet is, in this first sense, the explicit manifestation of the failure of Bourguibism, in Algeria as much as in Tunisia. Thus it marks the victory of the political strategy characteristic of a social group that requires close analyses because it both reveals changes in the internal power structures of the Maghreb nationalist movements and at the same time announces the class structure of these young nations.

On the other hand, on the French side, the recapture of the Algerian cities has brought about a complete union between the army and colonial society while at the same time subordinating the Algiers government to the army. The military effort, but above all the extent of repression required for

recapture, involved muzzling the opposition in France. This muzzling was made easier by the fact that such opposition is entirely formal, because the organizations from which it might be expected (mainly the SFIO and the Communist party) directly or indirectly participate in the repression in Algeria. We must admit, however, that the French working class has not, in all honesty, fought against the war in Algeria in the past two years. Here we face a difficult situation that is irrefutable in that it is a reality, a situation that obliges revolutionary thought to rethink its analysis of the colonial question from the beginning if it wishes to be able to both describe and change reality.

In this article I want above all to emphasize this fact, at the risk of shocking those on the “left” for whom active solidarity between the proletariat and the colonialized remains the sacred cow of the schema of permanent revolution. When concepts or schemas are refuted by historical reality over a period of forty years, the task of revolutionaries is to discard them without remorse and to replace them with others that make an effective struggle possible. From this point of view, with the intention of making a first contribution to the complete revision of the question of colonialism, I emphasize here what seems to me to be the key to the current situation created by the war in Algeria, namely the *burying* of class antagonisms in colonial society.

This interpretation does not mean that it is advisable either to abandon the concept of class (on the grounds that there should not be classes in Algeria, as the Messalists used to claim) or even to support the existing FLN unconditionally. It is necessary, however, to show how and why a bourgeois leadership (the FLN) can successfully mobilize all the Algerian classes in the struggle for independence. That is to say, it is necessary to show that the significance of this aim can temporarily mask class objectives in the minds of Algerian workers, and to show the reasons why this nationalist ideology has acquired such power. For if it is true that nationalist ideology only *masks* real antagonisms—antagonisms that are already apparent in the present power structure within the FLN—which we will try to find out in the analysis that follows, to have broken down the colonial nationalist movement into its basic elements is not to have done with analyzing it. The ideology that animates the nationalist movement, even if in the final analysis it is composite, is lived as a unanimous response to a situation unanimously felt by all Algerians (just as, for their part, all the Europeans of Algeria unanimously feel and respond to their situation, despite the internal antagonisms that actually set them at odds).

In other words, the nationalist ideology (like the colonialist ideology that is its counterpart) is not a mere fiction that the clever among us can denounce as a mystification fabricated by the Algerian nationalist bourgeoisie for its own ends. On the contrary, to deny this ideology the status of an effectively lived reality would be fictive. This is something we admit when we attack

economism or sociologism, which are content to dismiss the issue of independence with a smile as an abstraction: let such analysts put themselves to the test of reality, and let them try to advocate the slogan “class against class” in the present Algerian situation! We have to get rid of a certain kind of patronizing Marxism: an ideology has no less *reality* (even and above all if it is *false*) than the objective relations to which this Marxism wants to reduce it. First of all, I want to accord Algerian nationalist ideology the full weight of reality. In a subsequent article I will seek to show how this ideological reality inscribes itself within the contradictory dynamic of colonial society.

Deepening of the Contradictions in Algeria

Algeria is already no longer “French,” first in that French policy in Algeria from now on is made in Algiers, not in Paris, and also in that Algiers holds less authority than ever over the real Algeria.

Let us first examine this second point; it is the motor of the whole dynamic. In the fall of 1957, after months of fierce repression, the FLN found itself constrained to abandon urban agitation almost entirely; a strike like that at the end of January 1957 had become impossible. The strata that had participated in the action in the cities (primary schoolteachers, shopkeepers, workers and employees) had been decimated by the police and the army; thrown into the prisons and the camps, tortured to death or guillotined, the men of the underground networks had for the most part disappeared from the political struggle. The “liberals” themselves, those without a party, and the Europeans in general, were all condemned to silence by threat or exile and found themselves forced to abandon the hope that they had been able to entertain, during the double game of Molletism, of serving as intermediaries between the resistance and the repressive forces. Their disappearance from the political map coincided with the rise of the right to power in France. The FLN could no longer even show itself through terrorism as a form of political presence and protest. Crushed by a vast police and military apparatus that enjoyed the active support of the European population,¹ isolated from the few Europeans who wanted to keep in contact with them, convinced that all contact was from now on destined to failure, the Front then directed all its efforts toward the underground forces.

Eighty-five percent of the Europeans live in the cities. In turning to the countryside, the FLN necessarily broke with the Europeans. The rupture between the communities, already ancient and profound, became still worse. The guerrilla, peasant figure par excellence, took the lead over the secrecy of the *medinas*. The consolidation of the Army of Liberation seemed to the Executive and Coordinating Committee to be their immediate task, first for reasons of domestic and international propaganda (the UN session was

drawing near), next because the considerable influx of recruits made the formation of political and military cadres an urgent task. The increase in their numbers over the preceding year,² evident despite the far right's cries of victory, showed that the FLN's setback in the cities did not mean that it had lost contact with the Muslim masses. On the contrary, the FLN had pursued the work of political and administrative penetration that I described on an earlier occasion³ to the point at which the ALN's troops gradually lost their initial character as irregular formations: conscription henceforth draws on all young Algerians between eighteen and twenty-five; the local officials of the popular assemblies round them up and hand them over to military officials who escort them into Tunisia or into the zones abandoned by the French army. There the young recruits receive a military and political training in the camps and are completely kitted out before leaving to take their turn in the combat zones. This organization, the effects of which are undeniable, obviously requires the active participation of the entire Algerian peasantry.

The mass of the Algerian combatants is therefore made up of young peasants with an average age of around twenty; this social and demographic composition is obviously essential for anyone who wants to understand the combativeness of the ALN troops and the leadership of their fighting. As colonial peasants first of all, these men have nothing to lose in the struggle because they had nothing before undertaking it: in 1952, 70 percent of the Muslim enterprises were judged to be economically nonviable; they became still more so as a result of the fighting and the repression, which rendered many farms unusable (as is shown by the very appreciable slowing down of the return to the lands, especially in the east of Algeria). And, on the other hand, these totally expropriated peasants were born in 1938: they were seven, the age of reason, when the Foreign Legion "mopped up" the Sétif plateau and lesser Kabylie; fourteen when Messali was deported to Niort; sixteen when the CRUA launched the offensive on the night of November 1, 1954. Their contact with the French administration did not even take place through the usual educational channels, because only 2 percent of the Algerian population (117,000 children) were educated in 1950. For them, what is France but the rural sheriffs [*garde champêtre*], the police, the troops? "Of France, they only know a single face, that of the 'enemy' whom they confront, who shoots, wounds, and kills," writes R.Uboldi. It will soon be four years since they last saw an unarmed Frenchman. The feeling of undergoing a foreign occupation, the conviction that the French soldiers defend a usurped power, finally the certainty that this power is already no longer in a condition to effectively administer a people who rebel against it—this aggregate of ideas and forces that makes up the nationalist ideology—can only accelerate among the young peasants, and hence among the base of the ALN. The process of alienation from all that is French can only add to their indifference to French

problems and unhook the dynamic of their struggle even further from a consideration of power structure in France.

The intransigent positions taken by the FLN in articles in *El Moujahid* and in the declarations of its spokesmen in Tunis and Washington forcefully express this pressure of the fighting base and its ideological opposition to the military and political apparatus. Several journalists have testified to it. The commandant of the first battalion of the Eastern Base confided to R. Ubaldi: "Those under twenty are the most intransigent. For my part, I certainly do not have much sympathy for the enemy I am fighting. But I know another face of France: Voltaire, Montaigne, the Rights of Man, the Commune, Sartre, Camus—in a word, the best there is of the enemy." Visibly, the tension between the ALN cadres and soldiers now expresses both an age difference and a class antagonism. So, despite the tenderness that the Algerian intellectuals who constitute part of the political and military armature of the Front feel for French culture, the Frontist apparatus found itself forced to demonstrate in very harsh terms its dissatisfaction with its "natural" political partner, the French "left." I will return to this point, but I should point out at once that this breach certainly expresses a change within the internal power structure of the Algerian resistance, which results in turn from the present military situation.

By an inverse but complementary process, the conditions in which the [French] army regained control of the principal cities of Algeria aggravated the rupture between the government of Algiers and that of Paris. The liquidation of the clandestine networks had required the use of shock troops, the active participation of the European population in the civilian militias, the suppression of the last juridical hindrances to searches, arrests, detections, interrogations, condemnations, and executions. The occupation of Algiers by paratroopers for several months and the official delegation of full powers to their commander in fact constituted a new political situation; all the urgent decisions became from now on the concern of the military authority, which seemed by virtue of this fact to hold sovereignty in the cities.

In reality, the situation was completely different; from the ever closer collaboration between the armed forces and the civil and police administration that they maintained there necessarily issued an unusual coalescence of the attitudes proper to each of the two parties: the mentality of revenge of those defeated in Indochina and Suez and the far-right colonialist traditions of the General Government. And this ensemble exercised an ever stronger pressure on the political leadership of Algeria, on Lacoste and his immediate entourage. This same extremist spirit, which, as we will see, is not the sole property of the great colonists and which always eroded the good intentions of the guardians of republican power in Algiers to the point where none of them could ever change anything in Algeria, though Algeria had changed all of

them, then completely took over the minister for Algeria. Lacoste identifies himself totally with the *Français d'Algérie*: “plebianism,” shooting his mouth off, “flag waving,” secessionist blackmail, banging his fist on the table, bragging. He demands, he obtains. But no one is fooled: it is not Lacoste who has power in Algiers; it is Algiers that has power over Lacoste.

Algiers, however, is not even the military command. It is a military command under attack from the population that it delivered from terrorism. Assailed in the street, to the point that one saw the paratroops turn against the Europeans. Assailed above all by the spokesman of the *Français d'Algérie*, the leaders of the militia, the newspaper editors, the mayors, the presidents of veterans’ associations, the leaders of the patriotic students, and so on—all of which organizations have representatives, or “friends” who are in their debt, throughout the administrative and repressive apparatus of Algeria. And what is the social significance of these associations? They represent the quasi totality of the Europeans of Algeria, *a mixture of all classes*.

It is therefore indeed *Algérie française* that governs Algiers—at the same time that Paris governs it—through the medium of the organizations, the police, the administration, the army, and finally the minister. It was not Mollet who intercepted Ben Bella, but it was not even Lacoste; it was not Gaillard who ordered the Sakhiet raid, but it was not Lacoste, either, nor even probably Chaban-Delmas. The power of the extremists established itself uniformly in the Algerian cities; the army reconstituted it, but it penetrated the army itself. However much it is made up of city dwellers, the army henceforth expresses the only *Algérie française*, it is its faithful reflection, and *Algérie française* takes pleasure in it.

In fact, there is already no longer an *Algérie française*, in that “France” is no longer present in any form in Algeria: in the countryside, there is an FLN administration; in the cities, there is an extremist administration. Paris is present nowhere.

Deepening of the Contradictions in France

But France is saturated by Algeria through every pore.

World opinion was rudely awakened to this fact in the most obvious fashion after Sakhiet: the entire world knew, and Washington knew, that Gaillard covered up for a military and political operation that he had not chosen and that he no doubt considered inopportune. The motives of this young premier are too clear to deserve extensive analysis: a keen taste for power and an ambition worthy of another age have no importance here except insofar as they constrain him to espouse the cause of the parliamentary majority uncomplainingly. And this majority is made up of the right, along with the socialists. The latter, thanks to Mollet’s well-

tried voice, discovered that this right wing is the most stupid in the world. But they did not divorce for all that, stupidity not being statutory grounds for divorce in the SFIO, and since every left gets the right wing it deserves. After all, if the right reigns in France, it is thanks to the tomato throwers of February 6, 1956; behind Duchet, it is the patriots of Algiers who begin to implant their slogans, their people, their organizations, their journals, their reasons, and their insanity in the everyday life of the country. The atmosphere of Algeria is beginning to weigh upon French political life: there arises a figure who is half paratrooper, half socialist party member, the disguised warrior with the gloved hand, the abundant cockades, the muscled and ostentatious style, the nervous tone (but also with a fondness for the cops and a preference for middle-class streets) of true-blooded French and emergent fascists.

These grotesque creatures come to us from Algiers, which is the one place in the world where the decay of the French colonial empire, embodied in the very troops that camp there, is most felt as a matter of life or death. But from Algeria there also return the men who fought this war whether they wanted to or not, who are not grotesque, but even more disturbing. They also have experienced the powerful corrosive force that colonial society relentlessly exercises over all its inhabitants when it reaches the breaking point, unleashed from all restraints by the eruption of its contradictions into broad daylight. The youth of all French social classes do in effect live in Algerian society itself during their stay in Algeria. As I have said, the army into which they are incorporated reflects this society. It extends its fundamental function to the point of obviousness and absurdity, namely, that of suppressing the humanity of the "wog" [*crouille*]. The decay of democratic values such as respect for the person, equality, and so on is made easier by their lack of a solid grounding in class society (where the most casual glance may find them violated daily) and also by the campaign carried on by the bourgeois press for almost four years in order to legitimate this war. Above all, the efficiency of military training, which is after all only a more intensive form of colonialism, more than makes up for the relative "brevity" of a twenty-month tour of duty in Algeria in compounding this process. It is superfluous to continue: whether one reads the accounts of the draftees, the Muller file, *Une demi-campagne*, or even Mothé's text here,⁴ one already has all the documents necessary to analyze and reconstitute the ideological decay produced by the pressure of Algerian society on the draftees.

Finally, the fact remains that this permeability to the colonialist atmosphere, which is the only important victory that the chauvinist right has won in this war, is only possible thanks to the inertia of the French workers with regard to the Algerian question. This is the fundamental

fact that allows the isolation of the FLN, the recapture of the Algerian cities by the extremists, the bombing of Sakhet, the spread of fascistic demonstrations in France, and the aggravation of the policelike arbitrariness of the government. Everyone knows that if the spontaneous movement of the past two years of draftees refusing to serve had not been either directly opposed by the parties and the organizations "of the left" or left to wither away because of their maneuvers, none of this would have happened. But since that time, the workers have never directly demonstrated, through unambiguous actions, their solidarity with the Algerians' struggle. Why?

One can invoke obvious reasons: the SFIO and the Communist party did everything in order to prevent a clarification of the Algerian problem when these refusals to go occurred, and to exhaust the combativeness of the workers. The SFIO's motives are clear and do not deserve much attention. The Communist party's line is more wavering, and we will come back to it later on. But, at any rate, to explain the passivity of the working class solely in terms of the dilatory character of the Communist party's and the CGT's maneuvers is simply to state precisely what needs to be explained; it is to admit that the French workers were not really ready to fight on this terrain.⁵ These same workers showed elsewhere during this period that they were quite prepared to press their claims as far as their own objectives were concerned. No doubt these movements were sporadic, of course they constantly ran up against the basic need for an organization capable of throwing off the union yoke, and doubtless they have not yet resolved this problem. It is not a matter of underestimating the inhibition that the workers feel and that they express daily before the immensity of the tasks that they must confront as soon as they seek to move in a direction different than one mapped out for them by the union leadership. From this point of view, the struggle against the war in Algeria ought to encounter the same crushing difficulties, the same diversionary maneuvers, the same interunion cartels as all the protest struggles have encountered for years. It is the case, however, that over the past two years workshops and offices, factories, groups of factories (Saint-Nazaire, etc.), and entire sectors of the economy (banks) have entered into struggles, sometimes short and bloody, sometimes long and resolute, struggles for wages and working conditions, but they have never gone on strike against the war in Algeria. One cannot just put this down to a general absence of combativeness; it must be noted that solidarity with the struggle of the Algerian people is not intensely enough felt by the French workers to incline them to exercise pressure on "their" organizations sufficient to make those organizations commit themselves resolutely to the struggle against the war. On this point one may make an absolutely general observation that exceeds the confines

of the Algerian problem: when the independence of Vietnam, Tunisia, or Morocco was at stake, the French working class also did not actively struggle in order to aid the colonized peoples to reject the yoke of French imperialism. When the Mau-Mau rose up against British colonization, did the English workers intervene on their side in the struggle? And did the Dutch workers support the Indonesian movement? It must indeed be noted that solidarity between the proletariat of the old capitalist nations and the liberation movements of the young colonized nations does not appear spontaneously, because the European workers do not have an active awareness of the shared goals of the colonial nationalist struggle and of the class struggle; because the classic schema of this convergence remains abstract for them; because, finally, what remains concrete for the French workers is the cousin or the friend killed in Algeria, the gun that was given to them during their few months there in order to save their own skins, the assassination attempts in their neighborhoods, which are full of North Africans, and above all the difficulty of fraternizing even in the factory with workers separated from them by an entire culture.

Algeria and the “Left”

The situation is currently such that the Algerian war is a war that does not seem to concern the French proletariat. It follows that the few intellectuals who feel that this war is their affair are isolated amid the general indifference, and that they cannot find in the dynamic of a nonexistent workers’ struggle the teachings, the incitements to thought, and finally the concepts that would allow them to grasp accurately the historical meaning of the Algerian struggle and more generally of the liberation movement in colonized countries. Analyses of the Algerian issue, and the positions issuing from it, remain fruitless because these theories are elaborated in isolation from any practice. Of course, the leaders and the intellectuals of the organizations of the “left” are not hard pressed to continue to stick the old labels [*appellations contrôlées*] of the reformist or revolutionary tradition of thought on the colonial question to the FLN fighting, but it happens that these appellations have not been controlled by reality for forty years.

Roused by the accusations of “inaptitude for (colonialist) combat,” of “inability to master the combination of problems faced in this country,” of “opportunism and chauvinism” made by the FLN against the “democratic and anticolonialist left” in its press organs, this “left” makes urgent appeals to the political realism of the Frontists, anxiously inquires about their sectarianism, urges them to make its task easier. Doubtless in this way the “left” manifests both its “political sense,” its sense of “responsibility,” and a reformism that is hardly any less limp [*mol*] than Mollet’s. Above all,

however, the “left” justifies the very opinion that the Front has of it and still more its inability to situate the Algerian resistance correctly in a historical schema.

This explains the “left’s” unceasing advocacy of its solution: something like a negotiation, as quickly as possible. This also explains the role that the “left” has set aside for itself: pressuring both sides so as to lead them to an agreement. Now, it is obvious that neither this goal nor this procedure has the slightest revolutionary character: “immediate negotiation” had some meaning in the conditions in which the Russian revolution found itself at Brest Litovsk, for example, but what political sense would there have been to a roundtable of Yugoslavian underground fighters and German generals in 1942? The FLN’s situation is no doubt different, but this does not necessarily justify the *defeatism* that the French left urges upon it. Everyone admits that a pure and simple military defeat of the ALN is out of the question. So this “left” offers it a political defeat! It is because the “left” places itself above the fray, because it claims to incarnate “the general interest,” that it wishes to put an end to the massacre. We do not doubt the purity of these motives, but in the final analysis they actually seek to make the Algerian resistance accept a totally corrupt compromise with Algiers, that is, with the extremists, a compromise that the Algerian resistance knows it will not be long in regretting. The various left-wing appeals for moderation, the “put yourselves in our place” heard by the underground forces, resonate with the hollow sound of the cracked old class traitor’s bell.

Yet this same “left” does not make the same arguments to the French bourgeoisie, which might at least convince the FLN of the authenticity of the left’s internationalist zeal. In fact, the “left” tells the bourgeoisie ad nauseam that France’s grandeur suffers in the pursuit of this war, that France’s prestige abroad is collapsing, that the interest of France, properly understood, requires negotiation, that one cannot safeguard France’s legitimate interests in Algiers and in the Sahara by continuing to fight, and so forth. What is more chauvinistic, finally, than this rhetoric? Its constant compromises with the spokespersons of enlightened capitalism show clearly that, in fact, the left bends over backward to take the interests of French capital into account, while it has never managed to take the interest of the colonial proletariat for itself and in itself as the *sole legitimate reference point* that should ground its position. The fear of the right, or of censure, cannot constitute a sufficient alibi; the truth is completely different.

The [Trotskyist] International Communist Party (PCI), for its part, occupies a position on the left that clearly distinguishes it and that is based upon an extensive application of the theory of the permanent revolution to the Algerian problem. Since the Algerian People’s Party (PPA), which grew out of the Etoile nord-africaine, unquestionably had a worker base in France and a

peasant base in Algeria, and since the MTLD leaders who rallied to the FLN leaned toward participation in the Algerian municipal governments on the eve of the insurrection, the PCI concluded that the FLN is reformist and the Algerian Nationalist Movement (MNA) (which had its origins among Messali's supporters) is revolutionary. Finally, since the PCI learned from *Permanent Revolution* that a colonial bourgeoisie is incapable of achieving independence through its own efforts and that a proletarian revolution must supervene to extend the democratic revolution so that bourgeois objectives compatible with socialism can also be realized, the PCI concludes that it is good politics to support Messali, that is to say, the proletarian revolution. When the FLN's "sectarianism" and the conciliatory spirit of the Messalist declarations appear to contradict this interpretation, the Trotskyists explain that in reality the Frontists' intransigence with regard to their objective—independence—has no purpose other than to forbid the presence of the MNA in future negotiation and thus to nip in the bud the prospects for revolutionary development in the Algeria of tomorrow. Thus the murders perpetrated by the Frontists on the Messalist militants can be explained. The Algerian bourgeoisie seeks to profit from terrorism, a weapon alien to the working-class tradition, in order physically to destroy the avant-garde of its proletariat. The PCI paradoxically concludes therefore that the only authentic revolutionary attitude consists in struggling for "a cease-fire, the convocation of a roundtable conference bringing together representatives of all political and religious persuasions, of all Algerian ethnic groups, and the organization of free elections under the control of international authorities" (*La Vérité*, February 6, 1958).

This is a stupefying example of the degree of false abstraction that a political reflection can attain when it is steeped in dogmatism. First of all, the very core of this position is false: the schema of the permanent revolution is absolutely inapplicable to North Africa.⁶ It is based on the assumption of a combined development of colonial society completely different from that which can be found in the countries of the Maghreb. "In the Russian revolution," writes Trotsky, "the industrial proletariat took possession of the very ground on which the semiproletarian democracy of the craftsmen and sansculottes at the end of the eighteenth century was based.... Foreign capital...will gather around it the army of the industrial proletariat, without leaving the artisan class the time to emerge and develop. As a result of this state of things, at the moment of the bourgeois revolution, *an industrial proletariat of an extremely elevated social order will find itself the principal force in the cities*" (Intervention at the London Congress, 1907; my italics). Before generalizing the schema, it would be advisable to assure oneself that capitalist penetration in North Africa and particularly in Algeria took the

same form as in Russia during its imperialist period and that it produced the same effects there. In fact, everything indicates the contrary.

It is therefore ridiculous to imagine the MNA, heir of the MTLD and the PPA, as the revolutionary avant-garde of the Algerian proletariat, with Messali as its Lenin. Let the editors of *La Vérité* therefore reread the report of the second National Congress of the MTLD (April 1953); they will not find one single phrase that authorizes this interpretation. What they will find instead in the final resolution is the principle of "economic prosperity and social justice," which is declared achievable by virtue of "the creation of a veritable national economy, the reorganization of agriculture in the interest of the Algerians, especially through agrarian reform..., the equitable distribution of the national income in order to attain social justice and union freedom." Meanwhile, this same congress "assures Messali of its unshakable attachment to the ideal he represents." Decidedly, the MTLD was not, and the MNA is not, Algerian bolshevism, simply because there cannot be Algerian bolshevism in the present state of industrial development. Just because 400,000 North African workers work in French factories and building sites, they do not constitute a proletarian avant-garde. Such an analysis ignores the fact that here they are émigrés, that they are not integrated, and cannot integrate themselves, into the French working class, that they always return *home*, transformed no doubt by the life in the factory, but above all confirmed in their Algerian vocation. Finally, even if all of this were not the case, it would still be true that these 400,000 workers are not even at the site of the struggle. Yet a revolutionary push in the direction of socialism, if it is to take place within the bourgeois revolutionary movement itself, requires that the armed proletariat participate directly in the struggle and stand ready to defeat the counteroffensive of bourgeois nationalism on the spot. What permanent revolution can there be when the working class is separated from its bourgeoisie by 1,350 kilometers of land and sea?

Let me make it clear that this does not mean that the FLN incarnates the Algerian proletariat more fully. The FLN is a national front, that is, a "sacred union" of peasants, workers, employees, and petit bourgeois, with a bourgeois leadership. Its CCE is its Committee of Public Safety,⁷ all things being equal: it exercises an energetic dictatorship over the ensemble of the Algerian classes, a dictatorship that does not shrink from the use of terror. In order to explain the murder of Messalist union leader Ahmed Bekhat by the Front, there is no need to go looking for the pernicious influence of Stalinism infiltrating the Frontist leadership: the hypothesis is worthy at best of the intelligence of our Algerian minister and his moderate cronies. There is no collusion between the FLN and the Communist party, be it French or Algerian.

On the contrary, the softness of the Communist party on the Algerian question is now legendary, on the right as much as on the left. The official

line is to justify this attitude from the perspective of a popular front. It seems likely that the Stalinist leadership has sufficiently lost its capacity for political analysis to allow one to suspect that it hoped for nothing less than to outflank Mollet “through the base.” It is in any case certain that it never gave up hoping to infiltrate the state, as the SFIO manages to do. In general, people tend to ascribe it another intention as well: as an outpost of Moscow on the banks of the western Mediterranean, it prefers to aid French imperialism to maintain itself in Algeria for good or ill (the worse it goes, the better for the Communist party, provided that the French presence is maintained) than to see it replaced by American imperialism. As Léon Feix has already put it, in September 1947: “The independence of Algeria would constitute at once a trap and a consolidation of the bases on which imperialism rests.”⁸ And it is evidently not by accident that after Sakhiet, Moscow only managed to sigh to the Arabs: “And with American arms as well...” Of course, the *theoretical* line of the Communist party on the Algerian question has now inclined toward independence, but only recently and under pressure from the progressive French bourgeoisie who seriously risked ridiculing it completely by proposing an Algerian state, while it persisted in seeing in the French union “the sole possibility for the overseas peoples to march to the conquest of freedom and democracy” (Léon Feix, 1947). In *practice*, nothing has changed, and the Communist party contents itself simply with occasionally relaunching a “campaign for peace in Algeria” by means of down-at-heel front organizations and in the ultraprogressive form of petition signing.

This attitude was not born yesterday. In 1936, the Communist party violently attacked the Messalists; it denounced them as allies of the fascist colonists. The Muslim Congress of January 1937 (there was not yet an Algerian Communist party) in Algiers expelled the members of the Etoile nord-africaine, who sang the hymn of independence, from the room; finally, it “allowed” the Etoile to be dissolved by Blum without comment. In this tactic one recognizes the necessary consequence of a policy of systematic collaboration with social democrats and the bourgeoisie “of the left.” One should also note that this is an expression of the Stalinist policy of absorbing foreign peoples into metropolitan Communist parties. At that time, the Communist party could still hope to seize power in Paris, so there was no question of letting Algiers escape. But if one digs further back in the history of the relations between the Communist party and Algeria, one notes that at the Congress of the International in 1921, that is, long before Stalinism was born, the PCF’s delegate for Algeria already took a stand against all Algerian nationalism. In 1922, after Moscow’s appeal for the liberation of Algeria and Tunisia, the section of Sidi-bel-Abbès, the first to have joined the Third International, attacked it root and branch: “The project for an uprising of the Algerian Muslim masses [is] a dangerous folly for which the Algerian federations of

the Communist party, who have, first and foremost, a Marxist awareness of the situation, do not wish to be responsible before the tribunal of communist history.” At the time of the May 8, 1948, uprising, the men of the Algerian Communist party sided with the forces of order to participate in the repression. Marty had no trouble in recognizing, at the Congress of March 1946, that the PCA appeared to the Algerians “as a non-Algerian party.” Beside the constant compromises that the PCF has always sought “on the left” (that is, on the side of reformism and the progressive bourgeoisie), the fundamental attitude of the Stalinist militants of Algeria toward the nationalist movement always expressed, overwhelmingly and *up until 1955*, their adherence to colonial society. This characteristic and constant reaction, added to the tactics of the PCF, contributed in no small way to obscuring the metropolitan “left’s” assessment of Algerian nationalism.

Nation and Class in Algeria

It is true that in itself the Algerian struggle has not found a manifest class content in the formulation given to it by the Front. Is it because the Front, insofar as it is made up of a bourgeois leadership, *wants* to stifle this class content? No doubt. But it is also because it *can*. And if the French left in this case can so easily lose its Marxism, or whatever else it uses as a substitute, it is because the peculiarity of Algerian colonial society lies in the fact that class borders there are deeply buried under *national* borders. It is in a completely *abstract* way, that is, exclusively *economistic*, that one can speak of *a* proletariat, *a* middle class, *a* bourgeoisie in Algeria. If there is *a* peasantry, it is because it is entirely and exclusively Algerian, and it is this class that evidently constitutes the social base of the national movement, at the same time that it is the clearest expression of the radical expropriation that Algerian workers undergo as Algerians. We will analyze its historical movement and its objectives later on. But it is not, by definition, at the level of the peasantry that the linking of classes despite national antagonisms can occur because it is obviously among the peasantry, the only exclusively Algerian class, that national consciousness can find its most favorable terrain. No European in Algeria shares the fellah’s lot, none of them is exploited in the same way: the fellah’s position with regard to the relations of production is specifically Algerian. The problem begins when the position of the Algerians and Europeans among the relations of production seems the same and each side identifies itself in terms of its respective nationality rather than on the basis of this position.

In reality, if one leaves aside the most notable servants of the French administration, the “professional yes-men,” as their fellow citizens themselves call them (*caids, aghas, bachaghas*, presidents of Muslim veterans organizations, etc.), then no Algerian bourgeois, even if he marries a French

woman, even if he apes French manners to perfection, can be admitted to European society. And there is not one of them who has not in the course of his life suffered, under one form or another, an unforgettable humiliation. No European employer or shopkeeper lives in the same building or even the same quarter as the Algerian shopkeeper or employee. The European workers, finally, do not fraternize with their Algerian comrades. This is first of all because they don't live together. Bab-il-Oued is not far from the Casbah, but the police cordon that surrounds the Arab city isolates it from the European working-class neighborhood. Second, they do not fraternize because there is a hierarchy of labor by virtue of which the more qualified European worker is assured the most remunerative and least discredited tasks, because even if Europeans and Algerians work in the same workshop or on the same building site, the team or site leader is necessarily European. And, finally, because even in the unions and the workers' organizations, whatever the efforts of the CGT since 1948, the colonial hierarchy is mirrored to the point that the Algerian "leaders" of these organizations look like straw men and, when all is said and done, like counterparts of the yes-men "on the left." We cannot impugn the good faith, the real desire to break this colonial curse, or the courage of the militants of the organizations. But their failure expresses, sometimes tragically, the impossible situation that they faced before the insurrection: the task of reconstituting class solidarity within a society founded on its suppression. In fact, the immense majority of the Algerian workers remained outside these organizations and came together only inside the sole party that, despite (or perhaps because of) its defects, allowed these workers to fraternize without a second thought, that is, that prefigured a truly Algerian community.

There is no other way to understand why the European population of Algeria, with its small number of wealthy colonists (owing to the concentration of landed property), in which workers and employees form a majority that is itself exploited, has not dissociated itself from extreme right wing policy but has instead given it overwhelming support. Nor can the success of the insurrection itself be understood, an insurrection called for by a few activists who were sick of their leaders' inaction, which would not have been able to extend and consolidate itself as it did had not the Algerian masses felt that the struggle was well founded. This breach was so extensive that no Algerian struggle could expect to draw support from the massive solidarity of the European workers. Lastly, one cannot understand the FLN's present "sectarianism" when it affirms that "every French soldier in Algeria is an enemy soldier" whose "relations with Algeria are based on force" unless one hears in this intransigence, which perhaps shocks the delicate ears of the French "left" (which is often paternalistic and *always treacherous* toward

the Algerian people), the direct expression of the split that runs through and tears apart *all* the classes of Algerian society.

If the solidarity of the French in Algeria has never been seriously disrupted to the point where social forces could have taken up class positions, this means that in all their actions the *Français d'Algérie* (even if they were wage earners just as exploited as the Algerians) could not think of themselves except as Frenchmen occupying Algeria. And then it must be said clearly: the Algerian nation that constituted itself despite them could only affirm itself against them. There is in this hostility no mystique of the holy war, no resurgent barbarianism, but a people (and we intentionally employ this not very Marxist concept), that is to say, an amalgam of antagonistic social strata. This people is thrown back upon the consciousness of that elementary solidarity without which there would not even be a society, with the awareness that it must form a total organism in which the development of intrinsic contradictions presupposes the complementarity of those elements that contradict each other. Colonization both creates the conditions of this complementarity and blocks its development; the consciousness of being expropriated from oneself can therefore only be nationalistic.

Let us go further: the nationalist struggle, in the very forms in which it is carried out by the FLN, is not only liberating for the Algerian workers. It is only through its victories that the European workers of Algeria can be saved from the rottenness of colonial society and consciousness: in an independent Algeria, under whatever form, class relations will emerge from the swamp in which the present relations of domination have mired them. This does not mean that the new ruling class or the state apparatus of this Algeria should set to work at once to put the workers in their place: rather, all the workers will be united, Algerians and Europeans, to carry forward the class struggle.

With the Sakhet massacre, one can say that the break between the two communities has been widened more than ever: Algiers makes its war independently of Paris, and pushes Paris to carry out its war. But the FLN has also won its most resounding victory over Bourguibism. Paris and Bourguiba represented, at least in principle, mediating forces between the right-wing extremists and the nationalists. The centrist policy⁹ that Bourguiba implemented in Tunis in order to stifle the social contradictions of the young republic now stands as if struck by lightning. Meanwhile, the ALN imperceptibly takes possession of Tunisian territory, and Frontist ideology (which the Young Turks of *L'Action* echo in the Tunisian press) works its way into Tunisian masses exasperated by unemployment. The French colonists of Tunisia close ranks behind the president. Fifteen to twenty thousand Algerian combatants in Tunisia wait at attention for the French troops to leave, while Bourguiba only has half as many troops available. "The vigilance

of the combatants,” wrote Ben Bella three years ago, “will nip Bourguibism in Algeria in the bud.” The blind logic of the right-wing extremists risks destroying it in full flower in Tunisia, where the classically bourgeois leadership is not strong enough to long withstand the growing hostility of the working classes supported by the dynamism of the Frontists. The struggle that Sakhet has thus brought to light is one over the nature of power in North Africa tomorrow. But that is a problem that requires a longer study.

29

The “Counterrevolutionary” War, Colonial Society, and de Gaulle

(1958)

On March 27, 1958, the French government orders La question, in which Henri Alleg describes his “interrogation” in Algiers at the hands of the French military, to be seized. Pierre Vidal-Naquet publishes L’affaire Audin.

On May 13, 1958, the “pieds-noirs” revolt, and the Committee of Public Safety (CSP) is constituted under the presidency of General Massu.¹ On May 15, de Gaulle declares himself “ready to take over the helm of the Republic.” On May 16 and 17, the National Assembly passes the declaration of a state of emergency. On June 1, it invests de Gaulle as head of the government with full powers.

The military totalitarianism that has revealed itself during the Algiers coup is the direct product of the “counterrevolutionary”² war in colonial society. There is no question of theorizing it here. I only want to (1) identify it as an *authentic totalitarianism*, unlike the movements that the Communist party or the left irrelevantly denounce as “fascist” at every turn; and (2) situate its position and identify its importance among recent events in Algeria. What were the forces present in the Algiers coup? What is the dynamic of their development?

Two components of the Algerian situation played practically no role at all:

—The FLN did not intervene as an element directly engaged in the struggle: it is a year since it last controlled Algiers. In a sense, however, the whole affair was organized for its benefit, no less than for that of Paris.

—“Republican power” already no longer existed either in Algiers or in the cities, which had been taken in hand once more by the [French] army. It was expelled a year ago, along with the FLN: in order to destroy the Frontist

networks, it was necessary to destroy legality. Full military power was established on the basis of this double destruction. The actual occupation of the Ministry of Algeria and of the prefectures was thus a symbol, rather than a “revolutionary” initiative. On this level, the Algiers coup provides no new element; it brings to light a latent process that began a year ago, through which the armed forces came to hold total power.

But what does “military power” mean? The army, which actually holds power in Algiers, will claim that the army is simply a tool rather than a social force in itself. A tool at the service of which social force, then? It is in this respect that the Algiers coup reveals a new fact: the presence of the seeds of an authentically totalitarian organization in the army. We earlier claimed that the army “henceforth expresses the only *Algérie française*, it is its faithful reflection.”³ This view needs to be corrected: the relation of the military to the extreme right is not one of simple subordination. The extreme right can only exist politically for as long as the army holds back the FLN. Power is thus divided between the armed forces and the extreme right, producing an unstable political situation whose resolution will certainly involve the subordination of one group to the other.

But this assessment of the army and its position in Algerian colonial society is still too cursory. On the one hand, the army is no longer simply an instrument to be handled at will by whoever controls it. The process that brought it to power in Algerian society is in large measure beyond the control not only of the French bourgeoisie, who can only record this process by giving Salan the full powers that he already has, but even that of the extreme right, who were not a little surprised by the big display of “fraternization” staged by the army in the Forum on May 16.⁴ And, on the other hand, the French army in Algeria does not *currently* constitute a homogeneous political force: not all the soldiers have the same goals.

We will restrict ourselves to the elucidation of these two aspects of the situation because they allow an understanding both of what occurred in Algiers and of the current prospects.

First of all, the army currently has a tendency toward making itself into an autonomous force. It is not a social force, it is true. Yet it is an organized apparatus, and this apparatus can, in certain conditions, exercise power, if not on its own account at least with a certain independence from the class for whose ultimate benefit it exercises power. In Algeria, the following conditions made this possible: the impotence of the French bourgeoisie and its traditional political personnel in the face of the FLN led the bourgeoisie to relinquish its control over the military command; complementarily, this giving up of authority was made necessary by the nature of the Front’s military activities.

The military command, above all at the executive level, has finally grasped the nature of this war: strategically and tactically, it is identical to the one fought by the Viet Minh at the beginning of the war in Indochina. Tactics of harassment, of ambushes, of engagements restricted to advantageous situations, of vanishing in the face of “crackdowns”; a political-military strategy of setting up an apparatus for the administration of society, sometimes secretly, sometimes openly, an apparatus capable of shifting between covert and overt operations according to the military situation: “The army is in the people as a fish is in water.”

The paratrooper officers know Mao Tse-tung’s principle because they experienced it in Vietnam, no less than the one-time French subalterns who have now become Algerian colonels. A “revolutionary” offensive requires a “counterrevolutionary” riposte, they say. The paratroopers’ objective is then no longer the defeat of the ALN (a task they know to be interminable because they have understood that there is no purely military victory in this kind of fighting and that the liberation army would always spring up once more from its ashes), but the defeat of the Algerian people itself. Two solutions are offered: either exterminate this people (which is not politically possible on a large scale and which above all is contradictory: an Algerian society without Algerians is like a bourgeois society without workers) or win over this people, by all means possible.

The army is thus engaged in a *political* struggle, which is the real game being played under cover of the staff bulletins. The myth of the “rebellion” must be chucked out along with that of legality: there is no question of the army’s remaining a police force at the disposition of the prefects to put down the revolt of a few outlaws against the government of France. The army knows that its planes and its machine guns are not decisive arms against the Frontist machine; it needs the registry office documents, the land registry, the police dossiers, control of transportation, surveillance and maintenance of roads and railroads, permanent contact with the Algerians—in short, all the means of administrative management. Furthermore, the army must give this administration a real authority, install itself in the *mechtas*, live in the villages, run schools and hospitals, obtain and distribute seed, protect the harvest, organize the markets and the post office, settle local disagreements. Military “reorganization” thus becomes a kind of complete social administration that appears most obviously in the cities in the subdivision of neighborhoods into sectors, of blocks and buildings into subsectors, in the urban administrative sections, in some areas of the countryside in the special administrative sections. All possible means are used to carry out this implantation: denunciations from informers recruited among the Frontists who capitulated under torture, from among the pimps and the prostitutes of the Casbahs, the paternalism of the old officials of the Indigenous Affairs office, the missionary spirit of certain

young officers of Saint-Cyr,⁵ and so forth. Thus the army takes over functions that are ever more formally homologous with those that the Front used to carry out, although they are carried out to quite contrary ends. The army becomes more and more an *organism of administration* of society itself. Its practice tends toward totalitarianism.

This is the experience that crystallizes among the nucleus of the paratroop officers. They have direct and ancient experience of this kind of social rather than military war; they do not hide their admiration for their adversary; they want to model themselves after him. “We have in the sector of Algiers-Sahel,” said Godard on May 22, “one organization of Europeans and another of Muslims. They were, moreover, copied from the organization of the FLN. The first functions as the mechanism for urban protection, the second as the mechanism for organizing the Muslim populations.”⁶ At this point, these officers encounter the contradiction that forces them to choose: either maintain obedience to the bourgeoisie, the class that employs them, or choose totalitarian subversion. And this is where the army splits apart.

The army does not constitute a homogeneous political force. For the paratroop officers, it is obvious that the successful conduct of the Algerian war requires the mobilization of the whole French nation. Mobilized militarily, of course, because the forces presently engaged are not yet numerous enough to successfully achieve the total administration of Algerian society that this totalitarian nucleus offers to perform. But also mobilized economically, because the officers and their civilian advisers are well aware that the crushing military apparatus they demand in order to pursue the war will lead in the short run to an economic crisis that presupposed the muzzling of the French workers. And finally mobilized ideologically, because the military apparatus can do nothing without the active participation of all the classes of the nation in the war. This mobilization was carried out without difficulty among the European society of Algeria, because that society understands its relations with the Algerians as quasi-totalitarian. But the social basis of the army lies in France: therefore France must be mobilized.

These prospects are *authentically totalitarian* if one understands *totalitarian* to refer to a political structure where a strongly hierarchized and centralized politicomilitary apparatus monopolizes social power and consequently manages the whole of society. There is no doubt that this military nucleus we are talking about has clearly set itself such an objective. But it is no less certain that a faction that is currently more powerful hesitates in the face of totalitarian subversion and confines itself to Gaullism. It thus chooses to obey the discipline of the ruling class, with the condition that the latter discipline itself. Its Gaullist convictions are antiparty and antiparliamentarian, but they are not totalitarian; de Gaulle represents for it the imposition of

discipline on all the factions of the bourgeois class and on the workers, and if this wing of the army supports de Gaulle, it is not in order for him to impose a totalitarian apparatus on the bourgeoisie, it is, on the contrary, in order for him to give it back its power and for that bourgeoisie, through him, to give the army both clear orders and the means of executing them. This wing of the army also supports de Gaulle because he seems in its eyes to be the only person capable of putting an end to the Algerian conflict under “honorable” conditions for the army, that is, different from those of Dien Bien Phu or Port Said.

There are therefore within the army in Algeria itself, not to mention the army stationed in France, two substantially different political forces; they have temporarily come together on a Gaullist platform, but this platform represents a minimal program for the paratrooper core, while the authentically Gaullist wing bases its entire doctrine on it.

The initiative of occupying the Government General building (GG) and of the formation of the Committee of Public Safety, on May 13, did not come from the army, but from the leaders of the groups and networks that had been constituted within the European population of Algeria over the past three years and that have multiplied over the past year with the support of the military command, because they served its project of taking the whole of society in hand: the group Union et fraternité française” (Poujadist), the group and network Union nationale pour l’Algérie française (the rich colonists), the group Combattants de l’Union française (Biaggi), the group Union générale des étudiants (Lagaillarde), and the Association générale des élèves des lycées et collèges d’Algérie (Rouzeau), and so forth. To these must be added certain professional associations (chambers of commerce, chambers of agriculture, certain syndicates), the provincial clubs (Corsica, etc.), and the veterans’ associations. The web of these organizations thus effectively involves all age categories and all social classes. This intense politicization draws support from fear of the “poor whites,” who make up the large majority of the Europeans in Algeria, but it takes its directives from *L’Echo d’Alger*, an organ of the colonists. Its objective is quite simple: the total destruction of the FLN, the return to the status quo, and the entire preservation of colonial society.

May 13 was “made” by these groups, warned by Lacoste that a “Dien Bien Phu diplomacy” was brewing in Paris. Lagaillarde took the GG; Trinquier’s men, recalled from the Tunisian border, let it happen. The Comité de 13 mai was thus made up of two forces: the military totalitarian nucleus and the colonialist organizations. From its birth, the *comité* was therefore politically heterogenous. It is, in effect, impossible to fuse the totalitarian objectives of the paratroop officers and the colonialist objectives of the

Algiers organizations. The latter were spontaneously led to a war of extermination against all the Algerians who did not choose to remain “wogs” [*bougnoules*], while the officers were resolved to use the social power given to them by their infiltration of the Algerian urban and suburban strata so as to slow down the separation of the two communities and reintegrate them under its authority. Their disagreement therefore bore on actual Algerian politics, that is, on the attitude taken toward colonial society: the Algiers organizations wanted a classic repressive war, and the officers sought a “counterrevolutionary” kind of victory, which implied the “integration” of the Algerians. But they came to terms provisionally against Pflimlin, while the bulk of the army hedged its bets and began to maneuver with its traditional opportunism between Paris, the extreme right, and the paratroopers.

The next day, May 14, a new force entered the *comité*, a force that would stifle these contradictions without resolving them, and that would offer the *comité* the prospect of political development in the metropole. This was the Gaullist wing of the Union pour le salut et le renouveau de l’Algérie française [USRAF], represented by Delbecque and Neuwirth. Essentially an apparatus stemming from the old secret police of free France and the RPF [Gaullist party] shock troops, USRAF brings together “pure” Gaullists (Soustelle) and the men of the Vichy bourgeoisie (Morice, Sérigny). It had only recently taken root in Algeria, but it was established from the day that Soustelle consented to work with the capital of Sérigny and the colonists. On the other hand, it had rapidly penetrated among the Gaullist military cadres thanks to the complicity of ministers like Chaban-Delmas. Delbecque and Neuwirth could therefore offer the three forces present—the paratroops, the extreme right, and the army—the same objective: the seizing of power by de Gaulle.

But the extreme right is not at all Gaullist: they know de Gaulle to be hostile to the Algerian status quo and are not far from considering him a dangerous huckster [*bradeur*]. To undermine their resistance, Delbecque then gets support from the military apparatus, which mobilizes the Casbah, and presents the extreme right with an accomplished “miracle”: the Algerians want to be integrated into Gaullist France! It is May 16.

General amazement, and particularly of the *Français d’Algérie*, who, understanding nothing of the masquerade, feel, however, that the return to the status quo is temporarily undermined. The extreme right wingers take the blow, saving themselves for the sabotage of the integration that the Gaullists want to impose on them. Meanwhile, the latter score points: on the 17th, Soustelle arrives in Algiers; on the 19th, de Gaulle publicly supports the movement; on the 22nd, Salan cries “Vive de Gaulle!” in the Forum; on

the 24th, Corsica wakes up Gaullist without knowing it; on the 29th, the Parliament capitulates.

This is a victory for the civil and military Gaullists, opening the prospect of a “strong” and bourgeois state. But neither the totalitarian aims of the paratroop colonels nor the colonialist aims of the Algiers organizations can find satisfaction in it. For the former, de Gaulle is a stage, a Néguib for whom Massu will be the Nasser, as they put it; for the latter, de Gaulle is a hostage, like his predecessors at Matignon⁷—and all the more since de Gaulle has come to power through centrist routes, after beginning by mobilizing the workers.

The forces currently present in Algiers are still at odds: an army that is presently still largely Gaullist; a totalitarian core that does not have the capacity to extend “fraternization” beyond the Algerian strata that are isolated from all contact with the FLN, but that seeks to organize in France the mobilization of all classes under the tricolor; extreme right-wing organizations that, unable to cut themselves off from the army, have swallowed the bitter pill of the project of integration but are ready to support the paratroop officers in their totalitarian program so as to cut short what they believe de Gaulle’s Algerian policy to be; and, finally, the FLN, whose political-military potential is intact, its force, the peasantry, not having been seriously reached by the “counterrevolutionary” strategy, and whose diplomatic potential will soon be reconstituted by de Gaulle’s very impotence.

The only immediate problem concerning the relations of these different forces is therefore this: will the army remain Gaullist? Will de Gaulle take control of the totalitarian core within it, and will he oblige it to make the colonialist organizations give in? Or, on the contrary, will the army’s totalitarian experience in Algeria continue to develop into a consciousness and an organization? The answer to this question finally lies with the class struggle in France.

30

The Social Content of the Algerian Struggle

(1959)

De Gaulle, on June 4, 1958, at the Forum of Algiers: “I have got the message.” On September 19 the provisional government of the Republic of Algeria (GPRA) is formed under the leadership of Ferhat Abbas. On September 28 the new French Constitution is approved in a referendum, gaining 79.35 percent of the vote in France, 95 percent in Algeria. On October 3 the “Constantine Plan” is proposed to aid Algerian development. On October 5 de Gaulle proposes a “warrior’s peace” to the “rebels.” On December 19 he replaces Salan with Challe and Delouvrier. On December 21 he is elected president of the Fifth Republic.

On September 16, 1959, de Gaulle announces that the Algerians have the right to self-determination through a referendum. On September 28 the GPRA declares itself ready to begin preliminary talks. On November 10, de Gaulle makes an appeal to the “leaders of the uprising” to discuss an end to the conflict. On November 20 the GPRA appoints for this purpose the four “historic leaders” [Ben Bella, Aït Ahmed, Boudiaf, Mohammed Khider] who have been imprisoned in France since October 1956.

Over the past year, the power structure in Algeria has changed radically. On the one hand, capitalism has reconstituted its domination over its Algerian sector and over the military apparatus that this sector had sought to direct according to its own interests. But, on the other hand, this success has not yet allowed it to provide a solution for the Algerian question that is in conformity with its overall interests, beginning with peace. The resistance has not dispersed; it has not capitulated. It is, more than ever, the interlocutor whose response is awaited.

Meanwhile, the war has continued, bringing to light the intensity of the revolutionary process of which it is the expression. After a brief inventory of groups for whom May 13, 1958, represented a common victory, I will concentrate on the revolutionary content of the Algerian crisis and disentangle its social and historical meaning today.

An Internal Reorganization of Imperialism

One of the elements that had previously occupied the foreground of the Algerian scene was suppressed and almost eliminated as a determining force: the extreme right....¹

What still resists de Gaulle in the army is not the army itself; it is Algerian society. What may properly be called the “opposition of the captains” to de Gaulle’s Algerian politics does not express some kind of conflict between the apex of an apparatus and its executive branch but the real contradiction between present Algerian society and the intentions of French capitalism. The entire social administration in which the subaltern officers are employed willy-nilly by the very nature of the Algerian war is apparently irreconcilable with the instructions that these officers receive from the top. This was obvious at the time of the referendum and elections in Algeria. At that time, it was apparent that de Gaulle was seeking to isolate a politically intermediary petit bourgeois and bourgeois stratum among the Algerians that would be capable of serving as a counterweight to the FLN. But it is no less evident that the army (that is, the subaltern officers charged with actually carrying out the pacification), was not in a position to carry out this policy to its conclusion. The army as a whole had accepted that it could not apply such a policy: what can the order to “develop the local elites” mean for a captain charged with running a Kablye *douar*?² A good part of these elites belongs to the underground forces; the rest either dig in their heels and have to be forced to collaborate, or collaborate openly with the military authority. In both these latter cases, the success of the policy requires “protection” from the army against ALN reprisals, which means the consolidation of the administrative power of the captain. Consequently, having liquidated the most visionary but least solid resistances when Paris retook control of Algiers, de Gaulle’s government encountered, in the figure of the “captains,” the very substance of the problem, the object of the conflict in person, namely, the question of how to manage present-day Algeria. The problem of the army is no longer that of a conspiracy or a plot, it is that of a society.³

From this quick examination of the two large forces that were until recently united in Algeria against the Fourth Republic, we can see that over the past year Gaullist policy has put together some of the tactical conditions for an Algerian settlement, in the sense that it has freed French imperialism from

certain internal contradictions that hindered its approach to the problem. The depoliticizing of the Europeans and the military means the reintegration of the French Algerian sector into the bosom of imperialism. That was a preliminary condition for any serious attempt at resolving the problem.⁴ But it is evident that the problem is not yet solved, either in its appearance or in its essence, as the “opposition of the captains” has made us realize. The problem appears as 60,000 to 80,000 men who will not disarm; its essence is that Algerian society continues to escape all organization, that it lives in a kind of fluid institutional milieu.

Persistence of the Revolutionary Situation

The fact that the slightest reduction in the strength of the military presence is enough to weaken the French administrative apparatus, requiring draft deferments to be canceled, proves that the war is still going on, more violently than ever. If pacification means the set of operations that make the reconstitution of a *nonmilitary* society possible, no progress has been made in pacification. The most simple social activities are still out of the question in Algeria without the protection of half a million French troops.

As one of the generals put it, chasing away the bandits is not enough, we have to *stay*. It is a secret to no one that not even the smallest Algerian locality could last long, as presently organized, after the withdrawal of French troops. This fact means that the institutions that in principle ought to govern affairs in Algeria have lost all social reality; they function only within the range of a submachine gun. From a sociological point of view, and taking into account the nature of the Algerian war, the fact that the war continues is nothing other than the fact of the permanent maladjustment of social reality to the models of organization in which it has been dressed up over the past five years.

Not one of the legal costumes in which Algerian society has been fitted out, neither assimilation, nor “Algerian personality,” nor integration, nor the “chosen place,” has been able to clothe it; de Gaulle implicitly admitted this in offering a choice among three kinds of status. But this formal impossibility only reveals, in the legal sphere, a remarkable sociological situation: if French imperialism has not to this day managed to provide this society with any other mode of organization than that of terror, it is because no institution can currently respond satisfactorily to the needs of the Algerians. This is either because the behavior of the Algerians is such that the preceding social order is no longer appropriate to their conduct, or because their behavior has not yet managed to stabilize itself into a set of customs that would form a new order. One can summarize this situation by saying that Algerian society is destructured.

The Revolutionary Situation

When the CRUA [Comité révolutionnaire d'unité et d'action] opened hostilities, one could have believed that the MTLD [Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques] activists were continuing by violence what Messali, that is to say, Ferhat Abbas, had begun with words. When all is said and done, war was “the continuation of politics by other means.”⁵ Yet even if this description, drawn from the most classic reflection on war, applies extremely accurately to the imperialist conflicts of the twentieth century, it in no way conforms to the reality of any anticolonialist war. When a colonized people abandons the arms of criticism for armed criticism, it does not stop at changing strategy. It destroys, immediately and on its own account, the society in which it lived, in the sense that its rebellion annihilates the social relations constitutive of that colonial society. These relations only exist to the extent that they are tolerated by the persons who live there. From the moment when people act collectively outside the colonial framework, produce behavior that does not find a place within the traditional relations between individuals and between groups, then the whole structure of the society is, by virtue of this single fact, out of joint. The models of behavior proper to different classes and social categories, models that allowed each individual to behave in an appropriate way and to respond to typical social situations, become immediately outmoded because corresponding situations no longer present themselves.

In this way, within the family, relations between old and young, men and women, children and parents, are profoundly altered. The authority the father exercises over his son does not survive the son's political activity, his departure for the underground forces; the young man takes the initiative with or without his father's consent, and that alone is enough to prove that the situation as it is lived by the son not only contradicts his traditional subordination to paternal authority but also overcomes it. In a family structure that remains very patriarchal, the deed is already remarkable. But it is still more so when it is the daughters who escape the tutelage of their parents. No doubt the Muslim bourgeois women of Algiers had begun to “liberate” themselves before 1954; but even in this class (the one most influenced by capitalist civilization), if one showed one's legs, one still did not unveil one's face. Showing one's legs and veiling the face is, when all is said and done, a faithful enough image of what “our” civilization means by women's liberation. Nowadays, the participation of women in political and military activity is attested to by the sentencing of the Frontist militants, among whom Djemila Bouhired became an example for all of Algeria.

In another sphere, that of culture, the behavior implied by the present war completely escapes the traditions of colonial Algeria. Around 1950,

schooling touched barely 7 percent of rural Muslim children; this meant an illiteracy rate (in French) of 93 percent among the young peasantry. The Koran schools gave them an idea of written Arabic, which is about as useful as Latin for a French person. The poor peasants from this period are currently in the underground forces. It is difficult to imagine that they can take on certain tasks there without at least knowing how to read, and perhaps how to write. In learning these elementary techniques, they perform, implicitly or explicitly, a critique of both the miserly distribution of French culture and the uselessness of Muslim culture in their actual lives. In struggling against oppression, they regain possession of the most basic instruments of thought, which colonial Algeria had kept from them for generations. The revolutionary content of this new relation to culture is so obvious that the French command has had to respond to it by multiplying improvised schools. No doubt, the education of the underground fighters remains as rudimentary as that of the "protected" populations, and is limited to the future cadres. But the fact that these cadres can be drawn from the mass of peasants is in itself an absolute contradiction of the subaltern functions that colonization had reserved for the fellahs. Just as illiteracy was the direct cultural expression of the prohibition of all initiative that kept rural labor oppressed, so too the development of initiative and responsibility in the underground forces leads inevitably to the learning of written language.

As far as religious, economic, or sexual values are concerned, one can show that in all the categories of everyday activity, present-day Algeria, as it is actively engaged in the war, breaks with the modes of behavior out of which the combination of local tradition, Islam, and colonization had forged the "basic Algerian personality."

Thus one can say that a revolutionary situation exists when people no longer live according to the formally dominant institutions, and such is indeed the case in Algeria. This is not to say that the revolution has been made: the revolution presupposes that those who break with traditional social relations in this way will carry their critique to its conclusion and go on to destroy the class that dominated society by means of these relations, so as finally to institute new social relations. However, the open and durable rupture of a class or of an ensemble of classes with the structure of society necessarily has revolutionary significance.

Persistence of This Situation

In Algeria, this situation not only manifestly exists but also has an *intensity* and a *duration* whose combination can put us on the track of the real sociological content of the war for Algeria.

The duration of the revolutionary situation is well known: we are now entering the sixth year of war. Five years ago, the revolutionary direction of the insurrection was hidden enough to fuel fears that the actions of the night of November 1 were a simple flash in the pan of an adventurist or perhaps provocative character, in any case without a future. During this first phase, the numerical weakness of the fellahs, the artificial way in which operations had been initiated, the apparent lack of political preparation, and above all the recourse to terrorism seemed effectively to indicate that battle had not been joined on the terrain of society itself and that the groups of the CRUA, isolated from an apparently inert population, would not bring to an end the institutions they had judged irreformable and that they sought from now on to destroy by violence. If one compares the present state of relations between the units of the ALN and the population with what it was at the end of 1954, one can measure their closeness by the density of police control that the armed forces set in motion to prevent it.⁶ The support of the Algerian population for the FLN cause cannot be denied if one hopes to explain how half a million troops cannot manage to annihilate 80,000 rebels.⁷ This failure of repression implies a widening of the social basis of the rebellion over a five-year period such that it has completely lost its initial character and has developed into revolutionary activity.

The *intensity* of this situation is no less remarkable than its duration. At all times and in all places, abstention from social activity constitutes the elementary form of resistance to the organization of society, the refusal of its models of behavior. One observes it in all class societies among the workers: even though they are confined to carrying out tasks, they are constantly enjoined to participate in the organization of these tasks. They oppose these requests, which soon turn to the use of force; they adopt an attitude of withdrawal and of irresponsibility that calls into question the very model of the relations of labor that are imposed on them and that is ultimately directed against any society founded on that model. Duplicity, laziness, ill will, the tendency to steal—the smallest faults of which one hears the colonials accuse the indigenes—express at different levels this same unique refusal to take part in their own exploitation. Correlatively, the hatred those of French stock direct at the Arabs translates their own impotence to make them cooperate and their anxiety at the way in which Algerian “passivity” constantly dismisses the social order that the French wish to impose upon them. Racism is born of this. The Algerian has never showed himself to be a “good boy,” has never appeared cooperative; his behavior has never completely taken the edge off this barb aimed against exploitation, against the very structure of the society imposed on him, and his withdrawal into himself has in this respect been no less formidable than the explosions of violence that have shaken the history of French Algeria.

The Europeans have never forgotten, then, that despite the appearances they have wanted to give it, their colonial society does not hold.

Of course, had not social relations, prior to the beginning of the rebellion, grown so tense as to render a rupture constantly possible, the revolutionary situation could not have arisen out of terrorist action. Before 1954, no political movement controlled by the Europeans had been capable of correctly judging this level of tension, and even the “centrist” leaders of the MTLD did not suspect its intensity, since they hesitated for some time before going over to the activists. This is to say that the activists, closer to the peasant masses alongside whom many of them lived in illegality, understood better than anyone else the critical content of the fellahs’ attitude.⁸

But withdrawal into oneself, the impenetrability of the Muslim world to European constraint, only constituted one premise of the revolutionary situation. This form of resistance does not yet constitute a dialectical negation of the society against which it is directed, because it does not manage to overcome the social relations to which it opposes itself. It is only a first moment that calls for its replacement by a new form of struggle. The organization presupposed by such a struggle cannot be born (as the failure of Abbas’s and Messali’s movements proves) in “legality,” in an institutional system founded precisely on the annihilation of all Algerian initiative. The shortcomings of the nationalist bourgeoisie are here at fault; we will return to this later. The absence of strong nuclei of an industrial proletariat has the same effect. As for the peasantry, it cannot find the means to move positively beyond this form of resistance either in its working conditions or in its way of life. Algerian society was organized, in the most complete sense of the word, in order to prevent its contradictions from coming to a head.

The characteristics of the 1954 insurrection proceed from this. The handful of men who touched off the armed struggle introduced, without any transition, a direct and open violence where just one week previously there had not seemed to be the least trace of struggle. In reality, the mechanism of the contradictions came unjammed, and the underground forces offered the peasants, the workers, and the intellectuals the means of positively expressing their refusal of Algerian society. We will return later to the social significance of the solution given to the contradictions of that society by the CRUA. But opening fire was enough to demonstrate that Algeria no longer existed as a French colony. A colony is a society. When the colonized take up arms, they are already no longer colonized, and colonial society as such disappears.

Signs of This Situation

The *signs* of this dislocation of society, which are just so many symptoms of the revolutionary situation, are innumerable. The successive strikes that

affected workers and employees, shopkeepers, teachers, and students in the winter of 1956–57 brought the attitude of withdrawal described above into broad daylight, giving it a collective basis and solemnity. There was no doubt that these strikes could be defeated by force. But they were successful in that their defeat had required the besieging of Algiers by an entire army, since their goal was to show that henceforth that minimum of cooperation required for Algerian society to exist and function could only be squeezed out of the Algerians by violence.

But there is no end to the path of violence. At the limit, at least one soldier would be required to control each Algerian. Since dominant conditions in France, past and present, prohibited this totalitarian solution, entire patches of Algerian territory came to escape repression, that is to say, the administration of violence. What the French command called “exclusion zones” in reality excluded its own troops. The Aurès, the Kabylies, the Collo peninsula, the Ouarsenis, and the border regions all detached themselves from colonial Algeria. Of course one could not seriously imagine that these regions were impregnable. Recent operations have shown that companies of paratroopers and legionnaires can circulate in the rebel bastions and even set up outposts there. But here again it is doubtful if the real plan of the General Staff of the rebellion has ever been to liberate Algerian territory in this way. Apart from the evident strategic usefulness of these zones for the grouping of ALN units, for their fitting out, training, and furloughs, the fundamental function of these bases is also to teach the lesson that France is no longer capable of managing all of Algerian society according to colonialist norms.

This is still more the case in the zones where military occupation legitimates the fiction of an unchanged Algeria. The density of police control alone bears witness against the role it is supposed to play. The displacement, not to say the deportation, of hundreds of thousands of peasants (in reality women, the old, and children), their concentration in villages subject to the continual surveillance of the troops and to chronic betrayal by informers, the mopping up of deserted regions and the destruction of abandoned villages, the growing indifference of the military to the administration of all the affairs of the peasant collectivity—all furnish abundant proof of the inability of the French to administer Algeria, rather than of their ability to do so. This is not administration, it is treating a population like cattle. No doubt this genre of relations is implicit in every society in which some people perform tasks while others manage. The latter always attempt by every possible means to hide from the workers the fact that they have been transformed into mere objects, because the situation can only continue on the condition that the workers accept it. But here those who perform tasks are *manifestly* manipulated like things;

the very intensity of the means used against the revolutionary situation that is tearing Algerian society apart contradictorily reveals the intensity of that situation.

There are, lastly, the ALN units themselves. Their number is difficult to estimate, first because no one, on either side, has any interest in furnishing exact information, and second because it is hard to define what constitutes a combatant in a war of this kind.⁹ But an initial fact stands out: the ALN has not encountered any problems in recruitment over the past five years, despite the predictions (hypocritical or ignorant?) of the French command. The basis of this recruitment is the peasantry. The Algerian fellahs suffer from chronic underemployment; ten years ago partial employment afflicted half the rural population in all of North Africa, and the proportion is certainly higher today for Algeria alone, where many farms cannot be cultivated because of the military operations. To admit the hypothesis that the métier of arms has become a more remunerative profession than working the land for the young fellahs is to recognize once more (at the price of a singular ignorance of the real feelings of the underground fighter) the fundamental fact that the institutions according to which work ought to be carried out (that is, the relations of production) have become absolutely incapable of assuring production. Were it just poverty that swelled the ranks of the rebel units, that alone would be a sufficient justification of their revolutionary character. The abandonment of the land *en masse* by the young peasants is a refusal to continue to live as their parents lived; it is a break with colonial Algeria.

But so narrowly economic an interpretation misses the essential meaning of the constancy of rebel strength for years. Armed struggle is a qualitatively different form of resistance from those we have just listed: other forms of resistance *result* from it. In the existence of the underground forces and their permanence, the prior relation between the Algerian problem and the exploited is reversed: it is no longer the problem the Algerians face, it is the Algerians who face up to the problem of their exploitation, and this simple fact totally alters the situation. Previously, when any government, even the French "left" itself, broached the Algerian question, it implicitly adopted the position that it was necessary to solve the problem *for* the Algerians, which meant sometimes in their interest, and always in their stead.¹⁰ Anyone active in the organizations "of the left" in Algeria before 1954 cannot be ignorant of the fact that paternalism, the very same relationship of dependence they sought in principle to destroy, persisted in barely veiled form between European militants and Algerian militants. Of course, posing the problem for the Algerians in this way made it insoluble, because the essential content of the problem was nothing other than the universal form of social relations in Algeria, namely, dependence itself.

Armed struggle broke the spell. The Algerians, in fighting, no longer call for reforms, no longer demand to be given schools, hospitals, factories; they force imperialism to relinquish its ascendancy, they go on the offensive, and therein lies the literally revolutionary content of their action. Algerian society ceased to be a society of dependence from the moment when the “sub-humans” it oppressed demonstrated concretely that they were not debtors, and that they were prepared to die for this. One cannot understand the anguish of the Europeans in the face of the resistance unless one situates it within the framework of the reassuring paternalism that they sought to practice. The radical critique of the myth according to which the Algerians were created in order to obey, to execute orders, and eventually to be executed already blasted from the barrels of the shotguns of the first underground forces. Imagine the stupor of the true-blooded French! It was no longer their world put to the test; it was, precisely, their world turned upside down.

The Middle Classes and the Social Vacuum

But if it is true that the revolutionary situation, through its duration and its intensity, manifests the destruction of fundamental social relations in Algeria, one can, on the basis of this same intensity and this same duration, argue that the situation has not matured. One fact stands out: no one has emerged victorious from five years of fighting, neither the forces of repression nor the ALN. In the sociological sphere this fact assuredly means, as we have pointed out, that imperialism’s army had not managed to consolidate any lasting form of social relations in Algerian reality; but the duration of the war also implies that the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA) had not caused a new society, in conformity with its goals, to rise from the ashes of colonial Algeria. In examining the Algerian situation from this angle, I want to get at the class content expressed by this double failure.

The Bourgeoisie Does Not Control Frontist Strategy

The evolution of the ALN’s strategy and tactics over the past five years furnishes a first indication in this respect if one admits with Trotsky that “an army generally mirrors the society it serves.”¹¹ At first made up of guerrillas centered around a few illegal political circles in the regions traditionally most hostile to colonization, the CRUA network was constructed little by little between these nuclei along lines dictated by the exigencies of provisioning and by the political and military potential for taking root. The more the network tightened, the more the combat groups hid themselves deep within the Algerian population, the more the problems of recruitment and survival were simplified.

This process, evident in the countryside and the cities, reached its culminating point at the end of 1956 and the beginning of 1957. Then, the FLN's administrative hold on the rural communes and the Arab quarters of the cities made it into something like an antistate already skeletally present in an Algerian society still provisionally subject to French oppression. At that time, it was possible to wonder whether the Front might transform itself into a politicomilitary apparatus immediately capable of taking over, after victory, the administration of independent Algerian society. The combats, in which the ALN usually had the initiative, began to take the form of battles engaged in accordance with the rules of the military academy: the structure of the ALN hierarchized itself, ranks appeared, the units became larger and larger, the cultural command distributed pay. The dominant fact of this phase, namely, the massive incorporation of the bourgeois and petit bourgeois strata into the ranks of the resistance, was reflected in the ALN's organization and tactics by the growing importance of the cadres and the increased subordination of the infantrymen. The Algerian army appeared to prefigure the organization of a future society in which the bourgeoisie would not fail to subjugate the peasantry.

But it would have been premature at that time to want to identify the social nature of the Frontist leadership distinctly. First because this process of increasing structure remained only a tendency and because it was contradicted by the fact that the units owed their safety above all to the support of the rural population, who obliged the cadres to preserve the permanent motifs of rural dissatisfaction as part of their ideology, and to maintain respect for the peasant elements (whose representatives they claimed to be) in the structure of their command. Second, because this structuring of the ALN and the Front itself could be interpreted as either the expression of the rise to power of the Algerian bourgeoisie or the incorporation of elements of this bourgeoisie into an already solidly constituted politicomilitary apparatus. It was not yet possible, at this stage in the development of the Algerian revolution, to specify whether the Front had already acquired the capacity to absorb the elements of the bourgeoisie that rallied to it and to constitute an embryonic bureaucracy from among these elements and those emanating from the Organisation spéciale [OS]—or whether, on the contrary, the Algerian bourgeoisie had sufficient gravity to impose a policy on the Front that would be in its own interests.¹²

The development of events should have allowed this uncertainty to be resolved. During the summer of 1957, at the same time as Paris's authority over the fighting of the war collapsed, the block constituted by the rightwing colonists and the armed forces in Algiers imposed its own methods of struggle. The forces of repression were reorganized, their military strength swelled, the police networks multiplied, and their methods

intensified. Arms were distributed to the European population and it was organized into self-defense groups, while the form taken by the fighting in the mountains worked against the ALN units from now on: although equal in structure and tactics, their equipment could not rival that of the imperialist shock troops.

In the fall of the same year, the FLN lost the battle of Algiers, and in the principal cities its organization was hunted down by the paratroops and the police. The Front then turned its efforts to the breakup of its units, now too top-heavy to maintain their advantage in open combats with elite, well-trained, and powerfully equipped French regiments. Up to the beginning of 1958, the forces of repression retook the initiative, forcing the rebel units to split up and thus accelerating the process of reconstructing the guerrilla struggle. The French command, which had a free hand politically and knew it had regained the initiative in the conduct of operations, sought to destroy the rebel bases. The bombing of the Tunisian village of Sakhiet shifted the world's attention to Paris's irresponsibility in Algerian affairs and opened the political crisis in France. The contradictions internal to imperialism had by then reached their breaking point, and they passed into the forefront of the Algerian scene. During this whole crisis, the eyes of the forces were turned much more toward Paris than toward the Algerian hinterland.

The FLN, a little weakened, if not by the "fraternizations" of May 16 at least by de Gaulle's coming to power, could on the other hand profit from the relative respite lent by the settling of accounts between Paris and Algiers to reshape its military organization and its strategy. Large military formations were resolutely abandoned, as was open combat. When military encounters became official again, in the summer of 1958, it was apparent that the ALN units had regained their initial fluidity and had adopted the tactics of harassment and ambush proper to guerrillas. Instead of pursuing, alongside Salan, a relatively stable military control that immobilized a heavy fraction of its forces, Challe set himself the task of constituting units as mobile as those of his adversary, while he gave the police a role that was more administrative than military.¹³

It might have seemed after autumn 1958 that, helped by the lassitude of the fellahs, the fifth year of war would come to mean the collapse of the armed resistance. Only small groups of three to ten men crossed the mountains, and they only engaged in combat in the most favorable conditions. Already Juin proclaimed the war "virtually terminated."¹⁴ Excepting the fact that a war is always virtually terminated, even before it begins, this was a complete misinterpretation of the nature of the Algerian problem that confused political analysis with a military General Staff meeting. Let us drop this issue. What matters here is the following observation: there has not been, since 1954, any

constant rate of stratification that might have transformed a few dispersed guerrillas into larger, hierarchized, and centralized units. Or at least this process of stratification came to a halt toward the end of 1957, and then reversed itself.

The significance of this situation in the political sphere was that it tended to restore political weight within the Frontist leadership to the leaders of the underground forces, a political weight they had lost by virtue of their previous successes. As the resistance fell back onto its strictly peasant base, it revealed at the same time the true makeup of the social forces that were in the Front. As the ALN had accumulated successes, the Front had exercised an attraction over the bourgeois elements, consecrated by its coming to support Ferhat Abbas. At that point it was tempting to consider the FLN as the organ that the local bourgeoisie would use both to control the peasants and to open negotiations with imperialism from a position of strength. One could in this sense invoke the Tunisian precedent, where it was above all the underground forces who allowed Bourguiba to open the talks that led to autonomy.

But when de Gaulle's offers were rejected in December 1958, this proved that the bourgeois faction of the GPRA had not been able to impose a Bourguibist orientation on the resistance as a whole. The peasant leaders and the surviving outlaws of the OS had demanded the recognition of the GPRA as the Algerian government as a precondition to any negotiations, which is to say, the recognition of their own presence in all subsequent political phases. The GPRA's refusal to come to Paris to have its wayward behavior pardoned meant in reality that the members of the organization refused to give the liberal bourgeoisie a free hand in negotiations in which they could only be the losers. As soon as they laid down their arms, the members of the resistance would lose all real social force. They were kindly requested to return to their families to tell stories of their exploits, while the same bourgeoisie whose impotence had motivated the recourse to violence would occupy privileged positions offered to it by de Gaulle in an Algeria confederated to France. In rejecting the Gaullist maneuver—showing the white flag to the underground forces and unrolling the red carpet in Paris—by which imperialism sought to split the Front and to choose “natural” interlocutors within it, the GPRA not only safeguarded its unity, it gave proof that the extreme right wing policy carried out in Algeria, and in particular the attempt to crush the ALN militarily, had reinforced the position of the politicomilitary cadres of the armed rebellion at the expense of its liberal-bourgeois facade. The armed peasantry was still the only really determining force, a force that despite the attempts of bourgeois elements to reap the profits of its fighting was in sole control of the organization. This rejection by the GPRA also showed a relative but assured independence

in relation to the methods advocated by Bourguiba and employed by the liberal bourgeoisie.

Such an interpretation, moreover, is confirmed by the very origins of the Front. Not only did the initiative for its creation not originate among the political representatives of the Algerian middle class, not only had attempts at the constitution of an anticolonialist Front remained fruitless in the years 1950–52, it was only thanks to the destruction of the UDMA [Union démocratique du Manifeste algérien] and the MTLD that the union of the nationalist forces was accomplished in November 1954. The UDMA, traditional expression of the bourgeoisie desirous of participating in the administration of colonial Algeria, had disappeared from the political scene long before Abbas, its leader, came over to the Front. The MTLD, subsequently converted into the Algerian National Movement, lasted longer than the UDMA only because of its foothold among Algerian workers in France. However, the ever more conciliatory orientation that Messali imposed upon the MTLD, combined with the influence of the real successes of the Front in Algeria upon its militants, eventually caused the MTLD to break up. In Tunisia, to put an end to this analogy, the underground forces that arose after the massive police operations at the end of 1951 did not weaken the NéoDestour in the least; on the contrary, they allowed this bourgeois organization to consolidate and to extend its foothold among the rural masses, and no social force ever managed to come between the group leaders and the Destourian officials.

An examination of the relations of the Front with the “brother countries” of the Maghreb provides further evidence of the particular social character of the rebel leadership in comparison with the bourgeois nationalist movements. The interests that the Moroccan and Tunisian bourgeoisie hope to protect while settling their disputes with imperialism predispose them to conciliatory methods. The perspective of the propertied ruling class adopted by these bourgeoisies finds the war in Algeria and the intransigence of the GPRA to be a permanent obstacle to its own consolidation, not only in its diplomatic relations with France but also internally, thanks to the constant pressure exercised on public opinion in the two countries by the FLN. The pressure of masses of Algerian refugees and of important ALN military bases in fact allows Frontist agitators to propagandize actively among the Tunisian and Moroccan masses who populate the border regions. It is possibly the case that certain zones are directly administered by the cadres of the GPRA; the GPRA extends its influence over the political life of neighboring countries by means of political groups such as the old editorial team at *L'Action*, of which Bourguiba had to rid himself, or the PDI in Morocco. Collaboration between ALN units and groups of the Armée de libération marocaine in the south evades the iron fist of the Cherifian government. If the real influence that Tunis and Rabat exercise over the Front is much less strong than the

Front's audience among the Tunisian and Moroccan people, this is because the two Maghrebi bourgeoisies cannot find liberal elements among the Frontist leaders who might effectively impose "Bourguibist" orders.

One could find many more signs of the relatively weak role played by the Algerian bourgeoisie in the national movement over the past five years and more. I will examine the reasons for this later. However, it is important to emphasize the immediate implications of this weakness, which can be summarized as follows: if the revolutionary situation of the past five years has not yet developed in the form that could have been reasonably predicted, namely, as a sharing of power and profits between an Algerian ruling stratum and imperialism, this is first because imperialism has not managed to regain control of its Algerian branch, but it is above all because Algerian social reality could not provide representatives of a bourgeoisie to serve as interlocutors, a class that could at the same time present its own interests as those of all Algerian classes and show those interests to be immediately compatible with those of imperialism. There is an absolutely direct relation between the duration and intensity of the revolutionary situation and the fact that no social category capable of advancing its candidacy for the leadership of Algerian society existed at the beginning of the struggle. In other words, the elements of the bourgeoisie were still too marginal to the structure of society to be able to make changes in that society that could have brought the crisis to an end quickly.

An Aborted Bourgeoisie

The schema that Algeria offers is, from the viewpoint of the colonial question, the opposite of the traditional model. Here the political weakness of the colonial bourgeoisie does not proceed from the combination of its interests with those of imperialism in the form of sharing the profits of colonial labor; on the contrary, the Algerian bourgeoisie has been systematically excluded from the social positions where the sharing out of surplus value is decided. Its political weakness results from its economic and social weakness. It is this that requires explanation.

On the fringes of the precapitalist empires, which Marx called "oriental despotisms," there was always a marginal mercantile bourgeoisie whose function was to trade in the unconsumed surplus product of peasant labor to the profit of the bureaucracies.¹⁵ This stratum of merchants can be found in China and in the Indies, in the Muslim East, and still further away in Byzantium and even in pharaonic Egypt. Its presence is not fortuitous: it allowed the state to realize the surplus value present in the production seized from the peasantry over which it held an exclusive monopoly. A petit bourgeois artisan class that specialized in the production of luxury items

destined for purchase by the bureaucratic strata existed alongside this mercantile bourgeoisie. The petite bourgeoisie of the bazaars and even the mercantile bourgeoisie remained inevitably subordinated to the bureaucracy because that bureaucracy was the only outlet for their goods, owing to its exclusive appropriation of the riches produced by the villagers. The prosperity of these classes was therefore dependent on the degree of domination that the imperial functionaries managed to impose on the rural workers.

In Muslim Algeria, this structure was never present in a pure form. Society was never really dominated by the Ottoman bureaucracy. That bureaucracy did not even have a direct foothold in Algeria; all it did was make the domination of Tunisian pirates in Algiers and along the coasts official in the sixteenth century. The Turkish administrators "camped" in the country. They did not constitute a class in Algeria that might have destroyed the essentially tribal social relations that existed before their arrival in order to impose their own models of social organization. The real extent of their power did not exceed one day's march by their Janissaries, and their administration looked very much like pillage. The merchants who commercialized the product of the tax or *razzia* did not form an economically stable and socially distinct stratum that might ensure the regular functioning of social relations. For centuries, the principal source of revenue was piracy, actively encouraged by the pashas of Algiers. The characteristic traits of the Algerian ruling strata at this time were thus parasitism (not only with respect to the Algerian population, but also in relation to Mediterranean commerce) and a tendency to complete identification of the mercantile bourgeoisie and the bureaucrats of Algiers.

When the French disembarked in Algiers, rural Algerian society had kept its pre-Ottoman organization almost intact. The tribes of farmers and nomads who populated the interior were effectively outside the control of the administration in Algiers. A section of the Turkish bureaucracy had begun to detach itself from the administration and to develop itself into a feudal oligarchy by appropriating the means of production and defense into private hands. For their part, certain familial or tribal leaders had directly seized the collective patrimony. Meanwhile, dominant social relations retained the form of a free community collectively exploiting agriculture and shepherding. The Algiers bureaucracy for its part appeared to be in total decay. It had become a kind of organized pillage operating by piracy in the north and through mercenary raids on the tribal territories in the south. The mercantile bourgeoisie both armed the pirate ships and pocketed most of the profits earned from ransoms and speculated on the harvest stolen from the peasants. It thus linked up with the debris of the bureaucracy to form the ruling mafia that held Algiers in corruption and terror. The consolidation of the

European states after 1815 dealt a decisive blow to the Barbary pirates and ruined Algiers. At this point, Bourmont's army came to take the place of the Janissaries.

The petit bourgeois class of artisans and shopkeepers that somehow survived in preimperialist Algeria would find itself condemned to vegetate by the nature of the French occupation of Algeria. The social nature of the groups favorable to the occupation of Algiers in 1830 (essentially commercial companies) and the perspective they imposed for a long time, until financial capital became involved in speculation on farms, show that it was at first just a question of monopolizing the commercial routes of the western Mediterranean by eliminating the Barbary Coast pirates. But as land was seized and cultivated, the companies established in Algiers monopolized the ever more profitable commerce in the exportation of agricultural produce. The small Muslim and Jewish shopkeepers with their limited capital found themselves restricted to internal commerce, which was necessarily weak owing to the poverty of the peasants or to money lending at usurious rates of interest, the sole recourse of the debt-ridden peasant farmers. As for the Algerian artisans, they could no longer find a clientele either among peasant families reduced to the most minimal conditions of existence or among a French population that preferred objects imported from the metropole. The possibilities for expansion of the middle classes after the decomposition of the former mercantile bourgeoisie were therefore limited to their most simple expression.

In the other Muslim countries, and in general in almost all the countries it appropriated, imperialism used a procedure much less costly, financially and politically, than straightforward expropriation. Drawing support from the class in power at the time of its penetration, generally the agrarian oligarchy, imperialism attempted to continue to provide that class with the prerogatives of a ruling stratum—a state, a currency, a national language—contenting itself with shadowing each “indigenous” administrative department with a corresponding European department. This implantation offered the possibility of finding work in the administrative apparatus itself to a part of the middle class in the colonized countries. The rural, artisan, and commercial petite bourgeoisie, weakened from generation to generation by the growing concentration of riches in the hands of imperialism, could send its sons to school and to the university for them to become officers, professors, customs officers, postal workers, railwaymen, and so forth. Of course, the prospect of a reclassification of the unemployed middle classes within the state apparatus encountered short-term difficulties because both imperialist exploitation and the population of these classes grew at a faster rate than the administrative apparatus itself. But the process of concentrating the contradictions

stemming from the development of imperialism in the colonized countries within this administrative apparatus made the state itself into the weak point of colonial society. For the crisis that affected the middle classes and the local peasantry necessarily affected the personnel, originating from these classes, who populated the offices, the barracks, the colleges, and so on. Imperialism had no intention of offering the remedy of a welfare state, indefinitely maintained, to a society that it was in the process of destroying. The saturation of the state apparatus brought the crisis of the middle classes to its apex: ever more savage competition, generalized corruption, ever more radical contempt for the ruling class associated with imperialism. At this point the state offers, by its very structure, an organism that favors the expression of this profound dissatisfaction and accelerates its transformation into political activity; hence the determining role of the army in the Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi, and other revolutions.

In Algeria, none of this occurred. The direct appropriation of lands and trade by imperialism was accompanied by the occupation of all administrative departments by Europeans. The social origin of the personnel of the state apparatus was not, moreover, substantially different from its Egyptian or Iraqi equivalent: the “poor whites” who carry out subaltern functions are in large part the descendants of former colonists who had been expropriated by the companies. But the competition for the bureaucratic positions was unequal: the Muslim unemployed were handicapped by the use of French as the official language, by a whole system of behavior foreign to their cultural habits, and finally by the racial barrier. The percentage of Algerians employed in the administration remained remarkably small. Thus the Algerian middle classes were condemned by their very suffocation to liberal careers, which explains the large numbers of Algerian students in law, medicine, pharmacy, and so forth and also the massive emigration. In both cases, and especially when they are combined, the Algerians were ground under and their nationalism, if it ever existed, could hardly exceed the stage of declarations of intention.

It is an uncontested fact that in colonized countries nationalism is the ultimate response of the population to the profound *desocialization* produced by imperialism. It is reasonable to suppose that direct occupation, as was the case in Algeria, desocializes still more radically than appropriation by “intermediates.” Once all its institutions had been annihilated, the Algerian population experienced with particular intensity the problem of reconstructing a new social life, a mode of cooperation that takes as its basis the very state to which it has been reduced by the impact of colonialism and that therefore can no longer have recourse to a preimperialist model. Now, the nation constitutes the general type of response to this problem: it offers a mode of both coexistence and solidarity, and it espouses the very

framework given to the colonized country by imperialism. The nation unites people who have been ground down together, if not in the same fashion, by colonialism. It unites them independently of their tribal, village, or religious communities.

Still, in order for nationalist ideology to develop and spread as a solution to the colonial situation, social classes, with an experience or at least a vision of the whole of the society subjected to imperialist oppression, have to be able to provide a universal formulation and common objectives for all the particular dissatisfactions, all the isolated revolts. This role is in general assumed by the elements expelled from the former middle classes and regrouped in the very state apparatus that imperialism employs to maintain its control over society. In Algeria, this condition was lacking. What else could explain how Abbas could say in 1936, "If I could find the Algerian nation, I would be a nationalist, and I would not blush from it as from a crime.... I will not die for the Algerian fatherland, because this fatherland does not exist. I could not find it. I interrogated history, I interrogated the living and the dead; I visited the cemeteries; no one spoke to me of it.... No one elsewhere seriously believes in our nationalism"?¹⁶ What else could explain the fact that the Etoile, founded by Messali among the most politicized group of Algerian migrant workers in France, was *nord-africain* before being Algerian?

There is no need to go on: when the first shots rang out in the Casbahs in November 1954, the men of the OS had behind them neither a middle class still solidly inserted in the relations of production nor a state apparatus capable of being turned against imperialism and collaborationist elements. The nationalist ideology that burst into the light of day did not have, so to speak, specific sociological support, and it was not only a political void that they had to fill, but a social void. Speaking politically, the Front was not the pure and simple transposition of a preexisting nationalist organization into the universe of violence; it was, on the contrary, the violent means of making this organization exist.¹⁷ But socially speaking, there was no class affected by nationalism to the point of taking up arms; rather these armed groups crystallized among themselves a nationalism that the situation of the Algerian bourgeoisie had prevented from finding its proper expression. Thus everything took place as if the middle classes, insufficiently developed to be capable of effectively incarnating an idea of the nation that could serve as a response to the crisis of Algerian society, had been replaced in this role by an organization based directly on the peasant masses. Hence the form taken by the national-democratic struggle in Algeria, hence the intensity, the slowness of the revolutionary process, the length of the war. It remains to be explained where this apparatus came from, who these men

were, how their undertaking came to be the only effective response to the Algerian situation.

The Formation of the Bureaucratic Embryo

One can, in a sense, summarize everything that has just been said about both the revolutionary process itself and its class content in the following way: the Algerian national struggle could only develop in the shape of an underground resistance. These facts contain in themselves the revolutionary significance and the social import of the struggle. Its revolutionary significance, because the men who gathered in the underground forces consciously and almost geographically abandoned their traditional society in order to take up arms against it. The underground resistance is the society they want, distinct from the society they no longer want, and already present in it. This break with everyday life indicates the depth of the social crisis: since Algerian society offers no legal possibility for its own transformation, one must place oneself outside the law in order to modify it.

But the class significance of the underground resistance is much richer. The social basis of the underground forces is by definition the peasantry. If it is true that the present cadres of the FLN are largely elements stemming from the middle classes, which makes the underground forces the point of junction of the Jacobin bourgeoisie with the peasants, the same was not the case for the initiators of the movement. The role played by the outlaws of the MTLD requires some elucidation. This will furnish the proof of a real difference in social nature between the cadres of the FLN and the actual bourgeoisie.

Uprooting, Emigration, Proletarianization

Unlike the UDMA, a movement of notables, the political cadres of the old Algerian People's Party, which had become the MTLD after it was banned, came from the Algerian peasantry exiled in the workshops, the mines, and the building sites of France. If the Etoile nord-africaine was founded in Paris, this was not only because repression there was less fierce for the Algerians than in Algeria, but primarily because the consciousness of their activity and their need for solidarity was made more acute by their contact with the inhabitants of the metropole. A nationalist sentiment, still vague because it encompassed all the Maghrebis as opposed to the Europeans, was born of exile itself. On the other hand, the conditions of industrial labor and the close contacts that they maintained with workers' organizations taught these peasants who had been chased from their villages by imperialist oppression the reasons for their lot and the forms of organization they had to set up in order to transform it.

It is well known that the Algerians come to work in France for a few years and then return in large numbers to Algeria. Algerian emigration has therefore played the role of a school for cadres in the organization of the nationalist movement over the years. Thousands of Algerian peasants were born into the class struggle in the factories of Nanterre, in the mines of the north, on the dams. The metropolitan industrial universe played, in relation to the development of class antagonism in Algeria, a role parallel to that which the state apparatus played in Egypt or Iraq. In the Near East, as we said, this apparatus, by gathering together the debris of the middle classes ruined by imperialism, allowed these dispersed, individualized elements to become aware of the common nature of their lot and to seek a collective solution for it, once the crisis came to affect the functionaries themselves. In Algeria, what remained of the traditional local apparatus was annihilated, and the machinery that imperialism put in its place was practically closed to the Algerians. Hence two fundamental consequences: the crisis the middle classes underwent could not find a solution in officialdom, and their specific weight in society diminished at the same time that the population increased. On the other hand, the peasants could not find a safeguard for traditional institutions in the preservation of a local state, and thus they took the blow of imperialism in its full force. Imperialism not only stole their lands and their livelihood, it also stripped them of their way of life and their reasons to live. Thus, the debris of the classes dislocated by colonization could not seek refuge from and organize against exploitation within the colonial state apparatus itself. Rather, it was in the factories of France that peasants driven out by famine flourished and where they discovered the means of transforming their condition.

In what would come to be the bastions of the insurrection—Kabylies, Aurès, Nementchas, Ouarsenis—the peasants' contact with colonization was completely episodic. There were no large European properties, and the fellahs were not day laborers but free peasants. On the contrary, there were zones into which the peasantry had been pushed back a long time ago, while colonization took possession of the rich lands of the coastal plains and the valleys. As a result of this, the Kabyle villages, some of which are separated from any road by sixty kilometers of dirt tracks, lived in such a way that the relation between their own poverty and colonization did not appear immediately in the conditions of their work. On the other hand, in the rich lands, the peasantry was essentially proletarian: the lands were monopolized, and some of the peasants were employed as rented labor force in European cultivation, while the rest went into the city to make up the unemployed poor that populate the suburbs. Among this peasantry, which was in permanent contact with the colonial situation, certain conditions for the development of

a social and political consciousness were no doubt present. But they were constantly stifled by the crushing competition imposed on the workers by the scarcity of employment: those who have work do nothing that might deprive them of it; those who do not have work are reduced by poverty to an absolutely asocial and apolitical view of things. The lumpenproletariat was never a revolutionary class.

To sum up, in the isolated zones as in those of colonial occupation, the peasant masses could not find, although for different reasons, a social and political solution to the situation in which colonization had placed them. Among the impoverished mountain dwellers, the idea that adversity did not originate in nature but in the social conditions resulting from a century of colonization could not arise spontaneously. It would have implied a view of the peasantry that each individual village could not have; it supposed a historical perspective profoundly foreign to the cyclic repetition characteristic of peasant labor. In the agricultural proletariat, the permanent threat of lay-offs hindered attempts to constitute organizations of struggle. Finally, among the starving classes of the shantytowns, when it came to any class perspective, a specific attitude of destitution developed, showing itself in lack of foresight, absenteeism, and galloping population levels and definitively expressing the very essence of destitution: the lack of a future. This is why the peasantry as a whole expressed its critique of society through elementary forms of resistance, such as withdrawal into oneself or a return to the old superstitions, that contained no potential for a positive escape from its condition.

On the contrary, transplanted into the French factory, the Kabyle peasants came into contact in a real-life situation with conditions of exploitation that were bluntly exposed by the very organization of the workshops. The unemployed of the plains and the shantytowns found themselves brutally reintegrated into a socioeconomic unity that was as structured as their mode of life in Algeria had been “amorphous.” For some, industrial experience taught them to unmask the exploiter behind the supposed “necessities” of assembly-line work; for others it provided a sense of belonging to a collectivity. And for all of them, the direct experience of class antagonism in an industrialized country was *at the same time* the experience both of the capitalist organization of exploitation and of workers’ organizations’ resistance to exploitation. The learning of forms of struggle inside and outside the factory rapidly bore fruit. The close contacts of North African workers with the CGT [French communist trade union] and the Communist party before 1936 resulted in the transformation of a good number of these uprooted peasants into active militants, inheritors of the proletarian traditions, that is to say, already corrupted by the bureaucratized forms

that the Communist International imposed on the worker organization of the class struggle.

One might have thought that, through the sharing of industrial and political experience with the French workers, most of these Algerian workers would end up incorporating themselves into the metropolitan proletariat. Yet even those who settled in France continued to live separately, and the proportion of those who returned to Algeria was always high. Daniel Mothé has explained why assimilation into the French working class did not occur.¹⁸ The reasons he gives do not hold only for the period that he describes, during the armed struggle in Algeria. Even before the insurrection, Algerian workers were not able to integrate themselves into the French working class. Their relations with each other remain stamped by their precapitalist communitarian traditions and provide considerable resistance to the pulverization and automatization caused by industrial capitalist society.

To this social difference was added, at the time of the Popular Front, a definitive political divorce. Before 1936, the Etoile was in close contact with the Communist party. During the year 1936, Messali's men joined in all the mass demonstrations and participated in the strikes; in the month of August, Messali publicly unveiled a program in Algiers in which the objective of independence was given priority. But at the end of the year, the Communist party completely reversed its position on Algerian nationalism: in the factories and bistros of the suburbs, on the podiums of the congresses, the Stalinists accused the Messalist movement of wanting secession and, consequently, of complying with the most reactionary colonists. Thus they aggravated cultural differences, insinuated chauvinism and anti-Arab racism all the way into worker consciousness, finally pushing the Algerian movement to seek support from right-wing organizations like the PSF (which would steal its new name of Algerian People's Party [PPA] from the Etoile). In January 1937, the isolation that the Stalinist campaign imposed upon the Algerians allowed Blum to dissolve the Etoile, without provoking anything on the part of the Communist party other than a few platonic criticisms.

The Algerians thus took the measure of the "proletarian" character of the Popular Front well before the French working class itself did. It was nothing more than a coalition of the radical bourgeoisie, reformism, and Stalinism, carried along by a powerful push from the masses, and destined to divert the latter from their revolutionary objectives. The case of Algeria constituted a true test of the real political content of this coalition; the measures taken by the government and known as the Blum-Violette project, in suggesting the pure and simple assimilation of "enlightened" Algerians into the French bourgeoisie, aimed to consolidate imperialism in Algeria. This was indeed how the Algerian workers understood it: they were completely demystified about both Stalinism and reformism in colonial matters. It was from this

date that the Algerian movement gave up concerted action with the French “workers” parties and that the brightest of its militants began to understand that they could count only on themselves to put an end to colonialist exploitation in Algeria. They were certainly not surprised that the MRP-SFIO-PC government ordered or tolerated the massacre of the Constantinois in 1945, nor that on this occasion the militants of the Algerian Communist party, at least individually, lent a hand in the repression.

Cultural difference on the one hand, and the political breach with French Stalinism and reformism on the other, resulted in placing nationalism in the forefront of PPA ideology, and in returning the Algerian struggle to the terrain of Algeria itself. But in relation to the social composition of Algeria, where the peasant mass had to confront the elementary problem of its basic biological needs twenty-four hours a day, and where the liberal elements, because of their weakness, remained constantly tempted by assimilation and collaboration, the political meaning of the experiences of the Algerian workers in France could certainly only be understood by themselves and by the most advanced elements of the local proletariat. The latter still remained in large part in quasi-artisan conditions of labor, restricted to the least qualified tasks and in any case little inclined to risk the unemployment that the employers promised in the event of agitation; this proletariat was, finally, numerically weak.

The militants back from the metropole and the slim local avant-garde thus formed a peculiar political catalyst in a colonial Algeria where they could not act, even though they were the indirect result of one of colonial Algeria's major contradictions. Isolated by their worker experience and political consciousness from the large peasant mass in which they had their origins, deprived of all development on the proletarian side by the weakness of industrialization, conscious of the powerlessness of the “enlightened,” these men could not hope to obtain an audience in their country that would permit them to engage openly in political struggle against the colonial administration. On the contrary, their relative isolation allowed that administration to stop them, to intern them, to deport them, to ban them from staying in Algeria with total impunity. The prospects of legal political development therefore seemed completely blocked, and the project of constituting a solid clandestine organization to be used as seemed fit, below the official framework of the MTLD, was born of both the political impasse and the desire to save the most active militants from being decimated by repression. Thus the passage to undercover operations may have taken on, in the years between 1946 and 1950, the primary sense of a defensive parry; but the growing number of outlaws and the crisis undergone by French imperialism from the 1950s on would open the prospect of a fully offensive action to the underground cadres.

The violence of the repression that fell upon on the MTLD contradictorily reinforced the elements dedicated to the Organisation spéciale, that is, dedicated to the establishment of an armed apparatus. In general, the repression reinforced the underground members of the party at the expense of the politicians who had been previously placed in the forefront of the political scene by the legalistic direction taken at the time of attempts to form a common front with the UDMA. In 1954, the failure of the policy of unity with Abbas and of participation in the elections (that is to say, in the communal administrations) that had been advocated by the central organs of the party was manifest, at the moment when Tunisia and Morocco openly started the struggle for independence and when imperialism was suffering its most bitter defeat in Indochina. Strongly inspired by the precedent of the Viet Minh, with which certain of them had direct contacts and which they recognized as an organization close to their own, and directly boosted by the Egyptian revolution, the men of the Organisation spéciale thought that the moment had come to move into open attack, even at the price of a break with Messali.

Their linkup with the peasantry on the basis of the underground forces would prove relatively easy, and this for two reasons: in the mountains, many outlaws lived for years in close contact with the peasants and had worked on them politically; on the other hand, the very formation of underground forces coincided with one of the endemic forms of peasant resistance to colonial exploitation.

Among the rural classes corroded by imperialism, one always observes what is commonly called banditry as a chronic condition. When the fellah is crushed by debt, when he knows himself destined for prison for having violated legal provisions of which he understands nothing and that he experiences only as the brutal constraint of the gendarme or the rural police, he takes down his gun and rejoins those who hold the mountains. These "highwaymen" are the immediate and immemorial products of the exploitation endured by the peasants. It is useless to look toward the spiritual heritage of the Arab tribes or the congenital bellicosity of the Muslim soul in order to understand them. These are hypotheses at once too crude and too light, refuted by the observation of any other peasantry placed in the same conditions of exploitation.

It is perfectly accurate to say, as the high-minded press emphasized at the time in tones of virtuous indignation, that there were "bandits" in the underground forces. The only thing that can make anyone indignant in this affair, apart from the hypocrisy or the stupidity of the press, is that a society could, in the middle of the twentieth century, impose living and working conditions on the rural workers such that they could respond to them only with the behavioral patterns of their ancestors of the fourth century.

It is evident that this banditry did not have a conscious political direction any more than the storms of the *jacqueries* that blew right up against the gates of Algerian cities over the centuries. The simple fact that the bandits were at times obliged to attack peasants in order to survive suffices to show, if there were need, that the activity of these outlaws was not directed by any attempt at a solution to the agrarian question at the scale of the peasantry as a class.

But the symbiosis of the peasants in revolt with the outlaw cadres of the PPA would radically transform the political significance of fellaghism. By integrating men who had risen up against the crisis of the peasantry into the rebel apparatus, the cadres linked this crisis, until then felt primarily at the village level, to that of society as a whole. They thus resituated the worker in the Algerian collectivity and put his history back into the history of Algeria. They opened the eyes of a peasantry condemned to the horizon of the *douar* or shantytown to the overall perspective of political emancipation. The peasants' will to struggle thus found its continuation and the occasion of its transformation in the radical form given to political action by the cadres of the MTLD. The peasantry, incapable as a class of constructing a solution to the problem of its own exploitation, found, in the ideology and the practice that the outlaws inspired in it, a platform capable of crystallizing its combativeness and of giving universal value to its struggle.

Gestation of an Aborted Bureaucracy

One can now understand the exact relations of the *fellagha* cadres with the Algerian bourgeoisie and peasantry. The methods of struggle developed by the underground forces exercised over the middle classes both the attraction of effectiveness and the repulsion for violence that every owner of property, even a small one, feels. The middle classes could not manage, because of their specific situation, to move beyond a completely unrealistic liberalism in relation to the concrete Algerian problem. The young intellectuals, who had nothing much to lose, not even a career blocked in advance, were most quickly won over, and they were the first to incorporate themselves into the Frontist apparatus. The artisans and the shopkeepers took a more prudent stance, sympathizing openly when the Front's success offered them the hope of substantial advantages in an Algerian republic where their activity would not be bridled by imperialism, but withdrawing into neutrality (that is to say, into collaboration with the forces of repression) when the violence of those repressive forces inclined them to preserve what they had. All that the Front managed to extract from them was their money (in some small way their essence, after all). It is in any case clear that the military and political cadres of the rebellion are ideologically and politically distinct from the petite

bourgeoisie. The initial nucleus had peasant origins and working-class experiences that already sufficed to separate its mentality completely from that of the keeper of a small shop or an artisan: fundamentally, the outlaws were people who had nothing to lose, whether as expropriated peasants or industrial ex-wage earners, and the line that separates them from the bourgeoisie is the one between those who have (even to a very small extent) and those who have not the means to work. Their view of the economy and society is qualitatively different; their emancipation in relation to the private ownership of produced wealth is not reducible to the religion of money, the religion of the petit bourgeois. This sociological divergence is combined with the kind of contempt that the clandestine regulars, hunted down for years and trained in armed hand-to-hand combat, could not fail to feel for a class whose most extreme ambition was always, until the insurrection, to be assimilated into the French petite bourgeoisie. The FLN's men surely consider, and not without reason, that this attitude on the part of the "enlightened" has nothing to do with the permanent humiliation of the peasant masses for decades.

The cadres are therefore not politically petit bourgeois, even if a section of the intelligentsia has been incorporated into the Frontist apparatus. Does this mean that their objectives are those of the peasantry? There is no doubt that the ALN is a peasant army; but a "peasant army" contains social contradictions. The fact that many of its cadres, perhaps even the majority nowadays, come directly from the rural classes does not mean that this army does not contain anyway an antagonism between peasant objectives and the objectives set by the Front as an apparatus. Let us recall several symptoms. If the extermination of the Messalist underground forces could be explained by the more and more ambiguous attitude of the MNA [Algerian National Movement] and by the use the French command intended to make of Bellounis's troops, there is nevertheless no question that the peasants of the ALN should not have attacked without hesitation peasants who had like them taken arms and whose will to anti-imperialist struggle was no less indubitable than their own. The spontaneous attitude of the soldiers in this case should have been one of fraternization, even while the Frontist apparatus systematically pursued its program of the total liquidation of Messalism. The discipline demanded by the Front appeared in this connection as a discipline imposed from the outside, and one does not risk much in supposing that violent discussions in the *katibas* set the cadres and the peasants at odds, followed occasionally by deaths. In the same sense, the peasants could not have taken a benevolent view of the fact that the privileges of money saved the properties of the rich colonists and the companies so that the ALN saboteur groups kept to the small and isolated farms. Here again, the larger political perspectives invoked by the political

commissaries could have little impact on the sons of the fellahs, who were highly conscious that large proprietors had ruined their fathers much more than the poorer colonists, with whom, on the contrary, they felt a certain kind of community. Nationalism itself met with some suspicion among peasants too accustomed to promises not to sift them through the sieve of peasant wisdom. That the apparatus had not placed the agrarian question at the head of its agenda, that it had not untiringly repeated that the essential problem was that of the redistribution of lands and consequently of expropriation, could not leave the fellahs indifferent. It is, of course, of no importance to them whether Abbas replaces Delouvrier in Algiers, if the lands do not change hands in the countryside. They are told that Abbas will industrialize and that the overflow of rural manpower will find work in the factories. But Delouvrier also says that he is going to industrialize; and the fellah knows very well that it will take a long time for industrial employment to take up the slack of rural unemployment. In sum, there were already signs (those we mentioned and plenty of others) of an antagonism in the relations between cadres and peasants that bears finally on the overall meaning it is appropriate to give to political action and that reveals, in a still sketchy but already identifiable way, a *class* conflict.

An examination of the contradictory relations that tie the members of the Frontist apparatus to petit bourgeois elements and to the working masses proves in effect that the full-time cadres stemming from the former MTLD group and multiplied by the war itself do not faithfully represent either the middle classes or the proletariat or the peasantry, and that in fact they constitute a distinct state apparatus for the classes that they bring together (for differing reasons) in the common struggle. This peculiar class does not so much incarnate the political interests of any particular category in Algerian society as sum up the whole of Algerian society with itself: the history of its formation is nothing other than the unfolding of all the contradictions of Algeria. In the beginning, there is the absence of a bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalism strong enough to crystallize the malaise of all the Algerian classes around the idea of independence. Next, the birth of the nationalist movement among the émigré workers in France expresses one of the fundamental contradictions created in the colony by imperialism: the formidable erosion of the peasantry is not balanced by a complementary industrialization. The peasants do become industrial workers, but only in France. The Algerian political movement thus once more draws on the French and the world labor movement at the moment that it exposes the Stalinist gangrene for the first time in the West. The impossibility of finding a solution to colonial exploitation and repression, either for the local middle classes or for the parties of the French left, keeps a nucleus of "professional nationalists" isolated for an

entire phase. They will eventually find, in the crisis that weakens imperialism in Indochina, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco, the occasion to break out of this isolation through open violence.

The form of their struggle and its length, which I have called the intensity and the duration of the revolutionary situation, can be explained if one conceives of it on the basis of this sociohistoric content. No Algerian social stratum had the power to put an end to the war, prematurely from the viewpoint of the cadres, by entering into talks with French imperialism. On the contrary, the war was conducted in a way that transformed the nucleus of underground fighters into the elements of an apparatus, then fleshed out this apparatus itself at the expense of the social strata that suffered the colonial situation most severely. Many peasant youths left their villages in order to swell the ranks of the ALN and became politicomilitary officials; on their side, the intellectuals left the university or the legal system in order to transform themselves into political commissioners or foreign delegates, breaking all material ties with their class of origin. The Front, by on the one hand drawing the basis of its forces from the peasantry and on the other hand eroding the intellectual petite bourgeoisie, began to fill the social void of which we have spoken. Thus the organizational apparatus tended by its function in the war, and thanks to the duration of this war, to constitute itself into a distinct class. What had in the beginning been a political bureaucracy in the classic sense, that is, a set of individuals occupying hierarchical roles within a party, began to become a bureaucracy in the sociological sense, that is, a social stratum stemming from the profound decay of previous social classes and offering solutions that none of these classes could envisage.

The fact that this bureaucracy did not arise from the process of production itself, but out of the process of destruction that is war, changes absolutely nothing about its class nature, because at the same time this destruction directly expresses the inability of colonial Algeria to guarantee the productive process within the framework of former relations. Destruction here is only the form taken by the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, and we already know, after all, that violence is an economic category. It is understandable that this violence should eventually give the form of a bureaucracy to the class developing among the underground forces, because the totality of relations between the members of this class is nothing other than and nothing more than the totality of relations among the cadres of the politicomilitary apparatus, constituted precisely for the war: salaried, hierarchical, administering in common the destruction of traditional Algeria, as perhaps tomorrow they will administer in common the construction of the Algerian republic.

The process that is going on within a revolutionary situation that is now

five years old is the formation of a new class. The totality of the givens that compose this situation necessarily makes this class into a bureaucracy.

But in order for an Algerian bureaucracy to consolidate itself as a class, it would first be necessary for the revolutionary situation that keeps open the social vacuum in which it takes its place to continue long enough for the bureaucratic apparatus to be able to incorporate significant sections of the peasantry and the middle classes into itself. To this end, it would be necessary for the war to continue, and this does not depend on it alone, but also on imperialism, among other factors. Once this first hypothesis is admitted, it would still be necessary that the apparatus win a decisive military victory, on the order of Dien Bien Phu, from imperialism. Only then would the bureaucracy have acquired the capacity to eliminate its political competition, the French bourgeoisie, and to take in hand the reorganization of the country without compromise.¹⁹

Yet it is evident that the weight of French imperialism on Algerian society is much too heavy for these two hypotheses to be able to be reasonably retained. Given that the one-tenth of the population who control half of Algerian production²⁰ certainly think of themselves as belonging to the metropole, given that two-fifths of the land, which is more than half of the agricultural production, belongs to the French, given a Saharan mineral reserve that promises billions in profit, none of this will be abandoned, above all when imperialism emerges consolidated from the crisis to which the rebel has indirectly subjected it. On the other hand, all of this can be negotiated, and surely will be negotiated, because whether we like it or not, the Gaullist regime, if it wants to stabilize the Algerian situation even provisionally and to abort the process of bureaucratization, will have to take into account the fact that, over the past five years, some very serious candidates for the leadership of Algerian affairs have appeared.

In orienting itself in this direction, de Gaulle's declaration, however inflexible its tone, tried to locate (either within the Front or outside it) an interlocutor ready to negotiate a sharing of wealth and power with imperialism. And the response of the GPRA means that the bureaucrats of the apparatus are now ready to engage in preliminary talks within a democratic-nationalist perspective. In this present state of things, that is, if no serious reversal intervenes in the relations between de Gaulle and the European population of Algeria, this is the most likely prospect.

The political and social meaning is very clear: *the same crushing weight* of imperialism that produced the void in which the new class began to constitute itself now forbids it to develop completely. Since 1957, the Frontist cadres have been well aware that they both cannot be defeated and cannot win; for its part, the French military command has acquired the same certainty. This equilibrium cannot be broken from the inside. It will indeed have to be resolved

by a compromise between the two sides. Whatever the duration, the form, and the content of this compromise, its result will be, at least during a transitory phase, that the bureaucracy will not be able to continue to consolidate itself as it did thanks to the war. The single fact that there is a compromise means in effect that it will have to accept (for example, in the shape of elections) a new type of relationship with the Algerian population. Of course, we should have no illusions about the actual democratic character of these elections, but beyond the liberal playacting, the problem posed will be that of the real rooting of the politicomilitary cadres among the peasant classes who will be decisive by virtue of their numbers.

What remains certain in the meantime is that the war in Algeria offers us a supplementary example of the formation of the bureaucracy in a colonial country (with the specific feature that here the class in question has not for the time being reached full development), but also that the emancipatory struggle in the countries under colonial tutelage, in that it requires the entry of the masses onto the political stage, is the bearer of a revolutionary meaning that is important to emphasize. We are well aware that the perspectives offered to the Algerian revolution (as to all colonial revolutions) are not and cannot be those of socialism, and we do not support the Algerian movement because it will end up by modernizing social relations in a backward country. On this account, it would be necessary to applaud the Chinese bureaucracy, that is, an "intelligent" imperialism, if it is true (as we think) that no "objective necessity" prevents it from carrying out decolonization itself (as one sees in black Africa).

But what no ruling class, local or metropolitan, can achieve, or even desire, is that the colonial workers intervene *themselves, practically and directly*, in the transformation of their society, that they break off, effectively, without asking permission from anyone, the relations that crushed them, and that they provide an example of socialist activity personified to all the exploited and the exploiters: the recovery of social humanity by its own efforts. In particular, the Algerian peasants, workers, and intellectuals will no longer be able to forget (and this is of immense importance for the future of their country) that they, during these years, mastered their lot, desired their fate, and that therefore *it may be possible* that mankind may have the fate it desires.

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The State and Politics in the France of 1960

(1960)

Barricades in Algiers from January 24 to February 1. Proclamation of a state of siege. On February 2, special powers are passed by the government for a year. The Jeanson network is dismantled on February 24, and its members are judged and sentenced in September and October.¹ On September 6, the Manifesto of 121² proclaims the right to insubordination.

M. de Sérgny³ nibbling Ben Bella's crusts in the Santé prison, M. Thorez calling on the people to defend the general's republic against the "fascist agitators of disorder," the employers and Matignon encouraging the workers to take an hour of strike holiday without loss of productivity bonuses: in the face of this apparent inversion of all political indicators, a traveler who had left France in May 1959 would believe he was dreaming. Only one constant factor would allow him to feel at home: the attitude of the immense majority of this country, as always spectatorial.

What was called "political life" not so long ago was the fact that a significant fraction of the population took initiatives relative to the problems of society, participated in political meetings and spoke at them, displayed solutions it believed just, and in this way challenged the establishment and, if it couldn't overthrow it, at least shook up its plans. Yet, with the exception of Algeria (where such a political life, even if it is in decline, appeared in January among the Europeans, and where it manifests itself every day without fail in the shape of the armed activity of the Algerians themselves), France is politically dead.

It is in relation to this fact that the phraseology of the "left" appeared, during the January crisis, as completely anachronistic; it is this fact of which the revolutionaries (no less isolated than the organizations, though for other reasons) ought to become aware, on which they ought to reflect, from which

they ought to draw new ways of thinking, new ways of acting, if they intend to become the thought that human reality is in search of, as Marx put it.

Gaullism and Modern Capitalism

The Algerian crisis had been the immediate occasion for de Gaulle's accession to power in May 1958, but the new republic in reality had to untie the inextricable complex of problems that the Fourth Republic had allowed to knot together over thirteen years. All these problems could be formulated in one sole question: was the French bourgeoisie capable of initiating the changes necessitated by the modern capitalist world, in France and beyond?⁴ By its very existence, this world constituted an ensemble of challenges to the structure and functioning of French society, whether it was conceived as an economic totality or as a state or as the metropole of a colonial empire.

The Fourth Republic had manifestly failed to make the necessary changes. An incoherent economic policy alternated between modern investment decisions and laws supporting the most backward productive sectors. The restoration of prewar parliamentarianism allowed different sectors of the bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie to make their particular interests prevail one after another and reduced the executive to nothing more than the stake in a struggle between various pressure groups. Finally, the situation created in the old empire by the immense liberation movement that stirred up colonial peoples throughout the world did not evoke any collective response in Paris. But the reflexes of colonialist repression, which led in the long run to disastrous surrenders, alternated with sporadic attempts to find more flexible forms of imperialist domination than the old colonial link....⁵

The May 1958 crisis was therefore the result of a conspiracy. It was the whole crisis of French capitalism that erupted in it, and it was immediately clear that it could not be resolved like the "crises" of the Fourth Republic. This time, the question Who governs in France? was posed explicitly and in such a way as to interest not only professional politicians, but in fact all social classes, beginning with the proletariat. This was not a cabinet crisis; it was at least a crisis of the regime, at most a crisis of society as a whole.

It was at least a crisis of the regime in that, in any case, the Fourth Republic's mode of government, or of nongovernment, appeared inevitably doomed. At most a crisis of society, if capitalism could not manage to both develop and gain acceptance from the whole of society for a new regime, a regime capable of putting things in order, that is, strong enough to solve the most pressing problems (public finances, the franc, foreign trade, Algeria), a regime stable enough to begin to free the economy from the most serious obstacles to its development.

It is true that the political disorganization of the proletariat, resulting from several decades of compromises made by the Communist party and SFIO [the French International] with the bourgeois parties, gave rise to the "hope" that a serious crisis could be avoided. On the other hand, the adversary that big capital had to defeat immediately was not the working class, but the bloc of the colonels and the extreme right. But domination by this bloc, even temporary, risked leading the whole of society into a much more profound crisis than a simple crisis of regime.

The forces that openly attacked the Fourth Republic obviously only sought to impose a state in France that would serve the interests of the European colonial class of Algeria. These interests were completely incompatible with those of French imperialism as a whole. It is evident, for example, that major French capitalism could not envisage for a second the economic integration of Algeria into the metropole: that would amount to giving up ten or twenty years of normal expansion in order to end up a half century later with the whole country from Dunkirk to Tamanrasset at a still greater distance from the modern capitalist countries—not to mention what integration would have implied in the realm of domestic and international politics.

But what big capitalism could do, and what it did, was make use of the dynamism of the May 1958 insurrection in order to rid itself of the regime blocking its development in France and, once the new power had been consolidated, to rid itself of the very forces that had allowed the first phase of the operation. It thus remained master of the terrain without a serious crisis that might have called the domination of capitalism over French society into question having occurred. On the other hand, it brought about the "strong state" demanded by the army and the extreme right, while at the same time confiscating that state for itself.

In reality, the two phases were telescoped into each other, both because the project of big capitalism was not as immediately explicit as it seems in hindsight and because even had it been absolutely premeditated it would have been necessary to espouse the cause of its provisional accomplices for a short while. The current of May 13 thus swept up contradictory elements, defenders of *Algérie française* along with more or less innocent tools of modern capitalism. But, above all, this internal contradiction continues in the Gaullist state itself and explains both the essential ambiguity of its political (and oratorical) style and the permanent crisis that inhabits it. On the one hand, it cannot be denied that the diverse measures taken by this state with regard to the most urgent problems inherited from the Fourth Republic converge into one sole and identical meaning: to make the interests of big capital predominate in the domestic economy and in foreign trade as well as in relations with the colonies and Algeria. On the other hand, however, this significance could only be revealed very slowly. Each of these measures is matched or is followed

by a concession to the adversary that it aims to suppress; the power of big capital can only consolidate itself little by little in maneuvering its accomplices, just as the Gaullists of May 14 manipulated the men of May 13 in Algiers. In large part, the aborted crises that ended in the resignation of the ministers representing the French bourgeoisie of Algeria or the most backward sectors of the metropole expressed nothing other than the carrying out of a settlement of accounts between the partners of May 13.

That is to say, in this respect the Fifth Republic already shares certain essential features of the Fourth. Of course, the subordination of the particular interests of this or that sector of the dominant classes to those of big capital is much more explicitly pursued than in the preceding regimes; but the resistance of these sectors has not disappeared, and de Gaulle's power has not ceased to employ trickery to put an end to it.

We will return to the precarious character of this power. First, it is advisable to emphasize the fact that dominates all the others: the whole operation could only succeed provided that a massive intervention of the workers, proposing a revolutionary solution to the problems of society as a whole, did not cause the "response" to the crisis planned by the ruling circles to fail, and did not enlarge the crisis to its real dimensions. Now, this intervention did not occur. By an apparent paradox, while the crisis openly expressed the incapacity of French capitalism to manage society, the proletariat left capitalism at leisure to resolve the crisis in its best interests. What is more, the proletariat helped in the process, first by its abstention, then by its vote in the referendum.

De Gaulle was only possible because he was available to the French bourgeoisie to contain the crisis within the limits of its legality, that is, to turn it into a simple crisis internal to the ruling sphere, and not a crisis of the ruling sphere as such. The power of the Fifth Republic was constituted and the power of the bourgeoisie was reconstituted because the workers did not attempt, during those few days when the decayed state ended up in the streets, to take it over, to destroy it and to impose their solution. They did not even dream, as a class, of such a solution and setting it into motion, and finally did not seriously contest—that is, through their actions—capitalism's capacity to settle this crisis.

This *depoliticization* of the exploited classes (and of this exploited class, the industrial proletariat, whose working and living conditions always created the avant-garde of the worker movement) was thus the foundation of de Gaulle's regime, but it is also its permanent atmosphere, and this is what the January crisis showed anew. This is the fundamental fact of this period, and on two accounts: first because (as we just said) an analysis of the Fifth Republic that omitted the depoliticization out of which it arose and in which it maintains itself could not understand either its genesis or its present life; second because for revolutionary critique and organization such a depoliticization constitutes

a kind of challenge, almost a refutation: how, in effect, is one to persevere in the socialist project if it appears that this project no longer exists among the proletariat, at least in its *political* form? That is the question that de Gaulle's France puts to us, and it would be contrary to the task of the revolutionaries to avoid it by imposing outdated political categories on this world, by applying a political practice to it that does not correspond to reality.

We have always affirmed⁶ that in the absence of a massive intervention of the workers, French capitalism is capable of carrying out a transition to the structure required by the modern world; it is moreover a kind of tautology, if one admits that the only obstacle that makes a ruling class absolutely incapable of continuing to manage the ensemble of the society on its own account consists precisely in the revolutionary initiative of the masses.⁷

Of course, this adaptation of French capitalism does not happen smoothly; it encounters obstacles within the propertied classes themselves that come from the very structure of French society, these same obstacles that delayed as much as possible the necessary collective reorganization. But one can propose this idea by way of an overall assessment: however violent the resistance opposed by one section or another of the petite or middle bourgeoisie to the reorganization of the state, of the economy, of relations with the colonies, none had the power to make it fail irreversibly. This reorganization is not, in effect, a merely formal operation, like the arranging of a closet or the putting in order of a dossier; it has a social and political content; it means that big capital intends from now on to make *its* interests predominate over those of the petite and middle bourgeoisie.

Now, one does not risk much in prophesying that big capital will emerge victorious from this test of strength, within the limits imposed on it by its own interests, of course. It suffices to take stock of the means possessed by its adversaries and to analyze the problems that French society must resolve in the coming decade if it wants to continue to exist as a capitalist society that matters, in order to predict the final success of the "recovery" set in motion by big capital, that is to say, a still greater centralization of capital, the ever more complete domination of "organizers," the proletarianization of the former middle classes, and so forth.

In this sense, the present system, even if it is precarious in its political form, has an irreversible importance as the instrument of a deep transformation in French society. Even if de Gaulle were to disappear tomorrow, even if a "military power" established itself in France, the profound change that is taking place in this society would not be stopped. The disorder of the Fourth Republic did not hinder it, and the offensive of the Algerian colonial class, the most retrograde class in the country, which objectively sought the preservation at all costs not only of Algeria, but also of "daddy's" France, only succeeded finally in drawing big capital closer to direct political power.

If it is true, as we will see, that de Gaulle's regime is extremely precarious, it is also true that the transformation of the very bases of French society, of which it is the instrument, is durable and decisive.

The first precondition for the recovery of French capitalism was political, and paradoxically it is perhaps still the least satisfied. In effect, the bourgeoisie had first to endow itself with the statist political instrument that would allow it to impose on all classes the appropriate measures for freeing society from the impasse of the Fourth Republic. This instrument had to fulfill two functions and, consequently, to take on two forms: on the one hand, to free the government from the control that the parties and the pressure groups had previously exercised over it, and therefore to incarnate itself in a "strong" power; on the other hand, to create a political organization, a mass party, capable of maintaining the contact between the ruling power and the whole of the population, capable of controlling it, and of obtaining from it finally the indispensable simulacrum of its support for government policy. We shall see later on why neither one of these forms could be achieved by Gaullism, and consequently why its political situation remains precarious.

But in the absence of this perfect instrument of domination, the Fifth Republic nonetheless profits from the political crisis in which it originated. Parliamentarianism and the parties have come out of that crisis completely discredited. De Gaulle can therefore find a pretext in the profound distaste felt by the whole of the population, including the working class, for the regime of the parties, in order to assign a purely figurative role to Parliament and to leave the parties to pursue their henceforth harmless games there with complete irresponsibility. The referendum shows that de Gaulle was not wrong in betting on general contempt for the political forms and forces of the Fourth Republic. Constitutionally at least, he has a free hand. The new Constitution in effect endows the state apparatus with a "strong" structure, that is, sufficiently centralized and hierarchical for its organs to become in principle relatively inaccessible to impulses other than those that come from the top.

In fact, this structure is really strong only insofar as the pressure groups do not continue to divert certain branches of the state apparatus in their own interests. Otherwise, it is evident that directives from the top cannot have repercussions at the executive level, and one is presented with (which is the case) the paradox of a power whose form is strong and whose effectiveness is very weak. The pressure that interest groups, and particularly *Algérie française*, exercised through Parliament has apparently been eliminated, but in reality it is only displaced; from now on it works directly in certain departments of the administration and in the most important executive branches (army, police, information). This contradictory situation

results, as has been noted, from the very conditions in which de Gaulle came to power: the ultra faction, which carried him to leadership, had all the leisure, during the summer of 1958, to place its people in certain essential posts, and thus it acquired the ability to delay the implementation of measures decided at the top, or to neutralize them on the ground. If one adds to this that the branches so colonized are principally the army and the police, that the ground is Algeria, that the confusion of the state instrument and Algerian society is almost total there and has lasted for years, one can understand that the Algerian lobby found things made singularly easy.

Consequently, the present regime can only satisfy the requirement of a strong state formally, so to speak. In a sense, that is the defect it inherits from the preceding regime: the habits of unpunished disobedience in the army, the police, the administration (of Algeria above all), added to the pressures that come from the most backward sectors of society, are not easy to overcome, above all when one came to power thanks to them. But, more deeply, this precariousness of the state, so visible at the time of the January 1960 crisis, expresses more than a political heritage: it carries the real heterogeneity of the dominant class into the very structure of the administrative apparatus. It is because there are considerable inequalities of development in French capitalism—and, consequently, in sections of the bourgeoisie whose interests are radically at odds—that the instrument of bourgeois domination in this case continues to be the object of attempts at permanent seizure. A stable state presupposes at least a homogeneous dominant class. At present, the French bourgeoisie could deliberately sacrifice its particular interests to its interests as dominant class only if the working masses exercised a really threatening pressure on the political institutions that it imposes on them. But as long as the proletariat as a whole will not intervene, and as long as big capital has not, in the long term, destroyed the fundamental bases of the most retrograde strata of the bourgeoisie, the problem of the state will remain at issue. This problem is a kind of circle: the bourgeois state in France will never be “strong” while the bourgeoisie remains divided among profoundly contrary interests on most of the problems that it faces. But overcoming this division and leading the ensemble of this country’s structures to modern forms coinciding with the interests of big capital requires a strong state.

This objective difficulty was only shifted by de Gaulle’s accession to power, not removed. The Constitution was completely tailored to the size of the president, not worked out with a view to a durable stabilization of political institutions so as to make them relatively independent of the person of the head of state. In pushing de Gaulle to power, in giving him practically total power, big capital evidently resolved the most urgent problem posed to it by the insurrection of May; but it did not respond and could not respond to the fundamental problem of the form that its interests should give the state

apparatus in the long term. Because of this, the question of de Gaulle's longevity remains a troubling question for the ruling class.

Should one say that the same is true in Germany, in the United States? This would be at once accurate and inaccurate. It is true that in all the countries of modern capitalism, the subordination of all economic and social activities to an apparatus of political administration endows it with considerable powers and that centralization within the state apparatus itself makes its leader into the symbol of the stability of the society as a whole: that is why he always appears irreplaceable, that is why the leader's cardiac arrest or senility troubles the ruling classes. But, at the same time, these regimes are equipped to avoid an excessive interregnum: they have the parties. After a fairly long gestation, to judge by the average age of their offspring, these enormous machines end by vomiting from their entrails the fully prepared successors of the great man in power. The "competence" of these successors is beyond doubt, because it has been tried over long years of purgatory within the party bureaucracy. The transmission of power thus takes place smoothly after the disappearance of the head of state or government. But the parties have another, still more important, function in these regimes, and we discover here the second failure encountered by Gaullism with regard to the political problem.

On the political terrain, the ruling class confronts the same contradiction as in production: on the one hand, it monopolizes the functions of administration and decision, it completely excludes the worker from them; but, on the other hand, it needs the participation of the same people that it manages, even if only in order to know what they are, what they do and can do, what they want and do not want to do. Without a minimum of information, the bourgeoisie (or the bureaucracy) completely loses control of real society, its decisions remain a dead letter. In the political domain, this contradiction finds its expression and its "solution" at the same time in the functioning of the parties, such as it exists in Great Britain, in the United States, in West Germany, and so forth. These parties fill exactly the same double function as the unions in the firm. On the one hand, they have their roots in real society thanks to their base, and they express this society's opinions despite all the deformations imposed by their bureaucratic structure. But, on the other hand, and above all, the party represents an irreplaceable instrument of control over the population. Thanks to its propaganda organs and its militants, it can orient opinion in a direction that is appropriate to the conjuncture; thanks to its structure, it can capture and channel dissatisfactions. Finally, when the party is in power, its hierarchy incorporates itself from top to bottom into the state hierarchy, which assures the latter the effectiveness that ideological discipline or, more simply, careerism, gives.

The competition of two large parties allows the dominant class, in safeguarding the trappings of democracy, always to have a “spare state” in reserve; furthermore, the party of the “left” obliges the bourgeoisie in power to preserve its class discipline, while, inversely, the opposition party’s structuring as a quasi state (shadow cabinet) extracts all revolutionary content from the left. The parties are thus a kind of double of the state and at the same time probes that it pushes into the population in order to overcome its isolation in relation to society.

Now, the Gaullist authority does not possess these instruments. The very conditions in which big capital seized power in France required the pushing aside of all the parties, too compromised in the decay of the preceding regime, too numerous to produce uncontested candidates for the presidency. Big capital took power against the parties or at least despite them, and it appears condemned to govern for a long time without them. Despite the shared wishes of Mollet and Duchet, the evolution of the political spectrum toward a bipartisan structure appears highly improbable, at least in the foreseeable future.

For its part, the UNR [Gaullist party of the Fifth Republic] is not a party in the sense just mentioned but a movement whose internal institutions do not make of it a quasi state, and whose ideological and social composition forbids it from even playing the role of an intermediary between the authorities and the country: from this last point of view, the UNR is a heterogeneous pack of local notables, where the men of big capital are placed side by side with the small reactionary owners. It would not know how to free Gaullism from its ambiguity; it incarnates it.

One has difficulty seeing, in these conditions, how the state will be able to put up with this lamentable political situation. In the short term, the split between the parties and power continues to deteriorate; technicians, high functionaries, and other “organization men” have come, one after the other, to replace the fallen “political” ministers. But such a solution, if it does not hamper the functioning of the state in the present period, in no way resolves the problem of the relations between power and society.

The contradiction that weighs on the political “solution” that big capital has tried to give to the crisis of May 1958 necessarily recurs in other domains. But not everywhere equally: where the bourgeois adversaries of big capital cannot oppose a serious resistance to it, the general line of the latter’s policy affirms itself clearly: when, on the contrary, the terrain in dispute is already occupied by these adversaries, this line bends, beats around the bush; power comes to terms, at least momentarily.

In December 1958, having obtained the double acquiescence the nation gave him in the referendum and in the elections, de Gaulle sets out “his” economic program. Essentially, this program consists in taking a cut from

the purchasing power of wage earners on the order of 15 to 18 percent, directly by restrictive measures (freezing salaries, slowing down of consumption), indirectly by devaluation. The reduction of domestic consumption that follows, added to the reduction in the exchange value of the franc, allows a much more important part of the national product to be devoted to export, that is, to the acquisition of strong currencies. In a few months, the balance of foreign trade is reestablished and the currency stock reconstituted; from spring 1959, the normal rhythm of expansion begins again, and, at the beginning of 1960, the employers can envisage, if social tension becomes a little too high here or there, the possibility of proportionally loosening their stranglehold on the wage earners.

These measures are welcomed by the ensemble of the bourgeoisie, and for good reason: in making the workers pay for their carelessness, they resolve the problem of financial stabilization in the most "elegant" way. But the tidy equilibrium thus obtained is not sufficient. It is not enough to clean up the finances of the state or of foreign trade by aggravating exploitation; in the long run, one must undertake the rationalization of the most backward sectors of the French economy. Now, as we have just seen, attempts to put pressure on agricultural prices—even very limited ones—immediately provoke violent reactions from the peasant mass, for whom there is more at issue there than a haggling over its level of revenue. In the problem of the production cost of agricultural products, nothing less than the problem of the small rural property is posed: in relation to an "American" kind of economy, the French system of land ownership and its methods of cultivation are completely outdated. The peasant malaise can only get worse. The same holds for distribution.

Of course the middle classes who find themselves doomed over the long term do not have sufficient strength to block this process; but they at least have enough inertia to jam, slow down, or ride out its unfolding. It is clear that big business capital will for some time have to make concessions to this section of the active population if it does not want to alienate it; and it cannot afford to alienate it because of its enormous relative volume, the heritage of a century of conservative social policy. The extinction of shopkeepers, of artisans, of the peasants of the Midi and the West is thus not going to happen tomorrow, and French capitalism, however modern it may become in the wage-earning sector, will keep for some time yet the specific feature that a third of the active population works in financial and technical conditions identical to those of 1860. Therein lies the source of considerable difficulties, be they only those resulting from the noncompetitive character in foreign markets of the products manufactured under these conditions. The relaxation of trade restrictions by the most advanced sector of production will for some time have to accept import

quotas on many products that are in competition with those of French agriculture and small industry.

De Gaulle and Algeria

As for the problem of the relationship with the colonies, the Constitution already indicated that big business capital was going to try to resolve it through loosening the colonial link, that is, was going to break as much as possible with the exclusive tradition of violent and pointless repression. Further political development in Africa soon showed the effectiveness of this solution; the granting of a large measure of autonomy (that is, of independence) allowed a privileged local class, whose essential interests coincide with those of imperialism and that takes on the task of channeling or repressing the forces unleashed among the African masses by political emancipation, to consolidate itself on the spot.

On this point, the Gaullist enterprise did not come up against any really organized adversary. But the litmus test, the problem where “one had hopes of de Gaulle,” the problem from which Gaullism had arisen, remained the Algerian problem. No group inside the French bourgeoisie had known how to provide itself with propaganda organs capable of intoxicating public opinion, none had directly seized possession of a large proportion of the civil administration and almost the entirety of the military apparatus, none had defied the central authority, as had the colonial class of Algeria.

For these reasons, it proved extremely difficult to enforce a policy in conformity with the interests of big business capital. Throughout the summer of 1958, de Gaulle beats around the bush, maneuvers, does not come out either in favor of or against *Algérie française*. After the September constitutional referendum and the November elections, the first measures appear that tend to give Paris back its domination over the Algerian sector. The order given to the officers to resign from the Committees for Public Safety and the recall or reassignment of several superior officers manifest an intention to return the army to its executive function. Then de Gaulle's declarations seek to set in motion little by little a kind of third way, which would be neither that of the extreme right nor that of the GPRA [provisional Algerian government], but rather that of big business capital, of an association that would at the same time safeguard the essential elements of French imperialism's interests in Algeria and allow the nationalist leaders to win their case regarding participation in the affairs of the country.⁸ In doing this, de Gaulle went much further than any president of the Council of the Fourth Republic; through him, large metropolitan capital tried for the first time to define a policy in line with its fundamental interests.

Meanwhile, the insurrection of January 24, 1960, should have shown that de Gaulle's adversaries had not given up. Beforehand, it was already evident that the directives emanating from the Elysée continued to be translated into the language of *Algérie française* on the other side of the Mediterranean: the superior officers, the generals, and other marshals continued to make clear their own opinions on the declarations of the president; the instructions Delouvrier had received when taking up his post almost remained a dead letter; the legate-general himself appeared to give way in his turn to the irresistible Algiers atmosphere; the "patriotic organizations" and the extreme right wing groups openly declared their hostility to the policy outlined by Paris and threatened to oppose its application with arms.

All the difficulties of the regime seemed incarnate in the January crisis as those of the Fourth Republic were in May 1958. Pinay's departure (orchestrated in the Algerian manner by the extreme right wing of the independents) and the peasant agitation more or less dictated by the corporatists lent consistency to the hypothesis of an offensive by certain sections of the bourgeoisie against de Gaulle's policy. The uprising of the Europeans of Algiers threw out an explicit challenge from the Algerian lobby. The hesitation of the military command and the civil authority over several days finally seemed to affect the very texture of the Gaullist state. The whole ensemble allowed one to imagine a repetition of May 13.

However, notable differences soon appeared between May 1958 and January 1960 in the very style of the insurrection and in its development, differences that are explained finally by the new political situation constituted by this regime.

First, the Europeans who intervened effectively in the street were much less numerous and much less active than on May 13. In 1958, there were 100,000 persons in the Forum; in 1960, there were 15,000 in the center of Algiers during business hours, and not more than 1,000 permanent insurgents in total. In 1958, the movement had spread like wildfire through all the cities (thanks to the complicity of the army and the administration); in 1960, it affects the center of Algiers for eight hours, the center of Oran for three days, the war memorials of four or five cities for several hours. In 1958, the entirety of the administrative structure of Algeria entered into insurrection; in 1960, the insurgents manage to control no vital organ of Algerian society, they *retrench*.

Is this to say that the January insurrection is the creation of a few conspirators? If it had been so, it would not have lasted two hours, above all after the shooting. In fact, the men who made the insurrection possible were not Lagaillarde, Ortiz, and so on but the European blue- and white-collar workers, postal workers, railwaymen who really *rose up* against what they believe to be the destiny that the solution of an "association"

that de Gaulle wants to impose holds for them. They believe, in effect (and they are no doubt correct; the example of Tunisia and Morocco proves it), that such an association will oblige them to share their jobs with the Algerians, and that thus many of them will be obliged to expatriate themselves, to come to France to find work. Transposed on Algerian soil, that is, with the whole colonialist content inherent in their situation, the problem the “poor whites” encounter in Gaullist policy is, when all is said and done, the same problem as that of the peasants, the artisans, the shopkeepers of the metropole. To change Algeria into a “modern country” is to put an end to the “privileges” of race (not, of course, to the privileges of money), just as to change France is to put an end to the “privileges” of tradition. The rationalization of the capitalist world aims at the disappearance, not of the Bourgeauds, but the overseers of Bab-il-Oued, not of the Boussacs, but the farmers of the Moriban. The fear of these classes who feel themselves condemned and who know themselves to be defenseless is perfectly justified, even if the political reactions in which it is released are perfectly aberrant.

It is still the case that these reactions, we said, did not have in January 1960 the intensity they possessed in May 1958. There was an appreciable drop in tension in the Europeans’ combativeness. It certainly must be linked to the reinforcement of power in France, which made an effective popular pressure on the orientation of the affairs more problematic and improbable for the *Français d’Algérie* as for the *Français de France*. Concretely, in Algiers, that meant that the rallying of the army to the insurrection appeared much less easy than a year and a half previously.

It cannot be disputed that in effect the army as a whole was run in an appreciably more “loyal” way with respect to Paris than on May 13. No doubt, the troops that were placed in contact with the insurgents, when the gendarmes and the mobile guards had been withdrawn, treated them indulgently; but this fraternization became impossible when the paratroop division that had belonged to Massu had in its turn been replaced by domestic units. Over the period of more than two years that this division was stationed in Algiers, many Algiers men had joined its ranks, and many men and officers had married Algiers women. The interpenetration of the army and the European community was exemplified in this case in an extreme and unique fashion.

But the most decisive sign of the rediscovered “loyalism” of the forces is the abstention of the Algerians throughout the entire insurrection, for this abstention was in reality that of the SAU and SAS officers [who commanded Algerians in the French army] of Algiers and its suburbs; these same officers had, in 1958, mobilized “their Muslims” in the Forum to put on a show for both Paris and the extreme right, demonstrating to Paris that all of Algeria

was against it, demonstrating to the extreme right that they could not hope for the return to the colonial status quo, and indicating finally a Gaullist solution to the insurrection at the time.

In opposing the attempts of the 1960 insurgents who sought to recommence the "Franco-Muslim fraternizations," the group of captains clearly decided in favor of supporting de Gaulle's policy, and it is not excessive to see in their attitude the most significant fact of the crisis. As for the situation in Algeria, it indicates in effect that these officers, each of whom, as one knows, is "worth" the strength of thousands of Arabs voices, seem ready, in the event of a referendum, to exert pressure in the direction desired by de Gaulle, that is, for association. Thence proceeds the talk of a "Muslim thaw," thence the hurry to unleash a third force in favor of speedy regional elections. No doubt this orientation remains embryonic for the time being and can only come to fulfillment if the problem of relations with the GPRA, notably in the preelectoral phase, is positively resolved. But it nevertheless indicates an essential modification in the attitude of the section of the army that is finally the most important, the one that is occupied in the administration of Algerian society.

It is an error (which we never made here, even if we somewhat overestimated the retaking in hand of the army by Paris) to conceive of the army of Algeria, that is, the cadres in active service, as being endowed with a stable ideology, essentially fascist, and resolved only to enforce orders compatible with this ideology—not to mention those elements of the military, above all the oldest, who are officials mainly concerned with returning to a "normal" home life. The spirit of the officers most actively engaged in the colonial war cannot be reduced to a fascism or a "Francoism" of any kind. It is certain that they constitute perhaps the most politicized part of the country, in that they experience in the most immediate (in their everyday lives), most intense (their lives are at risk), and most persistent (since 1946) way the crisis of the regime that they obeyed for twelve years before bringing it down, the crisis of a society that they do not see as preferable to that of their adversaries, the crisis finally of the Western values taught to them by tradition and whose fragility they feel in the face of the enormous momentum of the colonial masses against the West. It is in this army that has for fourteen years defended an empire that it knows to be lost as such, defended a "civilization" whose real significance it could judge from its exported form through contacts with the colonists of Madagascar, of Indochina, of Morocco and Tunisia, and lastly of Algeria. Finally, it is in this army that the contradictions of modern capitalist society are lived, if not thought, more intensely than in any other section of the bourgeoisie.

It would be surprising if the army, having carried out essentially political tasks for years, were not politicized, that is, it would be surprising if it continued to "do its duty" blindly, without ever asking where it is. For even if "do your duty" means something in the traditional exercise of the military métier, on a battlefield faced with persons who on their side obey the same imperative, it loses all meaning when the lieutenant and his forty men, left in the center of a Moi or Kabyle village, receive the order to "pacify" it. The problem is then no longer to hold or die, but to find a way to give some content to the "pacification." Now, if this task is taken seriously, it inevitably means the reconstruction of a social community, integrating the soldiers and the peasants in relations that are as harmonious as possible. If therefore the military cadres as a whole harbor an ideology, it is neither fascist nor "Francoist," but "administrative": the officer imagines his task as a task of putting all social activities back on track, and he knows that this is not possible without the participation of the peasant community, nor, furthermore, without *his* participation in the peasant community.

These aspects became more pronounced in the Algerian war because, more than any other, it is a social war. De Gaulle had to try to restore to the army a minimum of confidence in his actions by exorcising the specter of a departure with arms and baggage that would have wiped out at a stroke years devoted to the reconstitution of an Algerian society. Hence the appeasements contained in his January 29 declaration and reinforced at the time of his trip at the beginning of March.

But no amount of appeasement can overcome the essential absurdity in which this administrative activity is steeped. As managers, it is true that officers tend to assimilate into the communities for which they are responsible. But this assimilation is of course impossible: first, administrative regulations concerning assignments, changes, promotions, and so forth, do not leave them in their villages for very long, which already shows that merely belonging to the military apparatus is incompatible with the task of administration. Second, and above all, their administrative ideology remains a *class* ideology. For them it is not a matter of participating equally in the reconstruction of society by following the project that the Algerians develop for themselves, but finally of imposing, under fraternal or paternal guise, a model of society as much in conformity with the interests of French capitalism as possible. And they must themselves be conscious of this fact, because they know and observe daily that the most active elements (the very force that obliged Algerian society to pose the problem of its organization anew) are not in the villages, but in the mountains, bearing arms against the village; they also know, however, that no social reconstruction is possible without these elements. The absurdity of the

military task in Algeria is that it wants at the same time to manage Algeria *with* the Algerians and *without* them (not to say *against* them). There is not an SAS or SAU officer who is not aware of this, and there is no “taking in hand,” even with an iron fist, that can prevent it.

For this absurdity is nothing other than the very absurdity of capitalist society transposed onto the terrain of Algeria, where violence brings it fully to light: in the factory, as well, the employers try to make the workers participate in the organization of their work but only within the framework of methods and objectives defined by the employers themselves, that is, without ever letting the workers actually manage. In this respect, the Algerian war is exemplary because it crystallizes and strips bare *the* most fundamental contradiction of the capitalist world, the only one that is truly insoluble *within* the system itself. French society, even if it were to be endowed with a state still “stronger” than de Gaulle’s, would not know how to fill the gaping void hollowed out in military ideology by the crisis in that society over the past fifteen years (what pious souls call the “malaise of the army” and the phraseologues of the left its “fascism”).

Therein lies an objective limit to the success of de Gaulle’s policy in Algeria. That is not to say that the Algerian war will last forever, but only that de Gaulle must find a solution to the impasse in which the army is caught if he wants to be able to put an end to the war without his state being seriously shaken. The modification that we said earlier could be detected in the spirits of the SAS and SAU officers will perhaps give him the means of getting out of this impasse, if they will henceforth accept working within the perspective of self-determination. That is not to say that the intrinsic absurdity of their task will be done away with, because all in all they will be asked to manage until the time when it will be preferable not to manage any longer, but for de Gaulle as for the employers, the problem is not that of knowing whether the absurdity will really disappear, it is that of knowing whether one can act as if it did not exist.

Finally, and if one does not take the fundamental contradictions inherent in the class structure of society into account, the immediate result of the Algiers insurrection appears to be the defeat of the European bourgeoisie of Algeria in the face of French capitalism. The relative isolation of the activists in relation to the demoralized population at large, along with the resigned obedience of the military cadres, allowed those in authority in Paris to decapitate the organizations of the extreme right and to displace the most compromised officers, thus at the same time consolidating its hold on the military and administrative apparatus of Algeria and breaking down, or at least seriously splitting up, a major obstacle to its policy.

The Transformation of Everyday Life

The barricades of Algiers were, like Lagaillard's beard, anachronistic. But the appeals to antifascist vigilance that resounded in France at the end of January were hardly less so. If it is correct that an endemic fascism raged in Algeria because of the particular structure of this society, it is no less so that there is no fascism imaginable in France today, nor in any other modern capitalist country.

In order for fascism to arise and spread, it is first necessary that a profound crisis call into question the capacity of capitalism to govern society as a whole, and particularly its economy, as was the case following the 1929 crisis. Next it is necessary that a significant segment of the proletariat that violently suffers this crisis no longer has the force to develop a revolutionary and socialist response and accepts the solution that big business capital offers it through the intervention of the fascist organizations. There is no fascism without a radical and open crisis of all the traditional institutions of capitalist society, nor indeed without the almost physical elimination of the political and union organizations the working class had previously provided itself.

Now the French economy is currently "bursting with health."⁹ There is no need to be a cynical banker to understand this. It is enough to look at the unemployment figures,¹⁰ the balance of exports and imports,¹¹ the speed of expansion in industrial production,¹² or any other indicator: it is impossible to imagine what aberration might lead so "prosperous" a capitalism to offer itself the expensive and risky luxury of fascism. Furthermore, there is no question of eliminating the workers' organizations, but rather of their growing participation, over the past ten years, in economic responsibilities, at least at the company level. This is an inescapable necessity for modern capitalism. To diagnose fascism in these conditions is the effect of paranoia.

And it is true that, apart from their dated little plots, organizations (like the Communist party, the UGS, and the PSA) that have called for the formation of antifascist committees do suffer from an ideological archaism close to psychosis. No doubt the phantom of fascism served them as a pretext for soliciting common actions, that is to say, cartel formations, from one another (which in any case will remain on paper); perhaps they could dream of "outflanking de Gaulle" in their defense of his republic. But whatever they may have dreamed or wished, they showed above all, on the occasion of the Algiers insurrection, their complete inability to rethink the political problem of the modern society or of the society on the way to modernization in which they find themselves. They do nothing but chew over the old slogan of the union of the left; they would almost be thankful if fascism existed because at least it is a situation with which they are *already* familiar, for which they already have tactics prepared. The fact that these tactics have always failed

matters little: at bottom, they cried fascism in order to bring it to life and, at the same time, to give life to themselves. This is no longer politics; it is the hypermemory of the dying.

The total indifference of the population to its appeals revealed the confirmed decay of the ideology of the left as did the open hostility or disillusioned irony with which the workers greeted the “strike” for which the unions and the bosses called with one voice.

If either the unions or the bosses hoped to politicize the workers in one direction or another, on the occasion of the Algiers insurrection, it must be agreed that they completely failed. The persistent repulsion that the proletariat as a whole feels when faced by “politics” could not be overcome despite the ingredient of fascism. The proletariat no more stirred in January 1960 than in May 1958. To tell the truth, for what, to what ends, might it have stirred? There was no question of its defending de Gaulle: the workers had directly experienced the class meaning of power, through the reduction of their standard of living and through the acceleration of working practices in the firms. Yet what did the organizations propose to them? Safeguarding the Gaullist order, that is, their own exploitation. Evidently, no political perspective could be outlined by the organizations of the “left,” which deserve no further critical attention.¹³

But this distaste for worn-out organizations is not enough to characterize the attitude of the proletariat toward politics. This distaste seems to extend to the political sphere itself. The working class, if it is still capable of fighting, and hard, at the company level, is not producing new stable organizations in which not only its protest program but its communist project might crystallize. The idea of a global and radical transformation of society seems absent from the present attitude of the workers, along with the idea that collective action can bring about this transformation. The spread of this depoliticization greatly exceeds implicit criticism of the parties and the unions. We must search for the true reasons for this, decide to open our eyes, to identify the immense transformation in the everyday life of the working class (which has been going on in the bowels of our society for the past ten years) in which this depoliticization inscribes itself, to give it its full historic and social significance and to draw from it the political conclusions that must serve as a guide to our action. We can only hope to provide a sketch of this task in what follows.

The health with which the French economy is “bursting” implies first of all a more rapid use of its labor force for workers, both blue and white collar. The present rhythm of expansion supposes in effect an increased productivity, even taking into account the entry of the younger generation into production. The “rationalization” that the employers impose almost everywhere on the

proletariat operates according to completely different processes from one location to another, sometimes employing brutal Taylorism, sometimes using the police methods borrowed from Ford, sometimes adopting the most modern techniques drawn from industrial psychology and sociology, but always with the machine itself as an objective constraint imposing rhythms and gestures. But all these processes converge into a single project, which is the increased alienation of the workers in their labor, the more and more subtle disruption of their traditional means of struggle against exploitation, their more radical expropriation from any initiative, their ever more visible degradation into the simple appendix of a management that is itself ever more invisible. The exteriority of workers in relation to what they do thus continues to deepen, and correlatively their activity appears more clearly than in the past as a simple moment in the circulation of capital: on the one hand, work has now become for the majority of wage earners time wasted in gestures stripped of all interest and all real meaning; on the other hand, the money received in exchange for this time does not seem to result from this time itself in any thinkable way. The relation that exists between the eight hours passed figuring on a cash register the price of the objects that the clients of a supermarket present when leaving the store and the 30,000 or 35,000 francs [\$60 to \$70 at 1960 rates] that are given the employee in exchange for these eight hours is felt as absolutely arbitrary. That means that even the pecuniary stimulant, this final reason behind the whole organization of capitalist society, has lost all effectiveness, not as a stimulant, of course, but as the expression of a real hierarchy in the value of different kinds of work.

There is thus at once a more complete incorporation of the workers into the working sphere (and this is what we mean by emphasizing that the workers feel themselves to be merely a phase in the capitalist process) and a more complete exteriority of labor in relation to the workers. The rhythms are more rapid, the working practices are more oppressive, the harassments of control are more petty—and at the same time the content of what one does is more indifferent. The tensions that result from this situation are thus different from those produced by work of a more technically simple nature. The new working practices require higher and poorly remunerated professional qualifications, and these tensions are released in strikes and demonstrations decided on the job, which tend to hold firm, to be directed as much at local working conditions as at wages, and which are usually rewarded with success. Even in France, where the breakup of the organizations of struggle has been significant, such workers' actions now appear frequently; they are common currency in countries like Great Britain and the United States where "rationalization" is more advanced. But these

strikes do not spread, given the lack of organizations with suitable structures and ideologies.

The “compensation” for this alienation (but need it be said that this alienation does not allow, cannot allow any “compensation,” and that the very idea of “compensation” is a product of the capitalist philosophy of the permanent possibility of a cash equivalent?) is provided by modern capitalism, and is beginning to be provided in France, in the form of a more elevated standard of living. Part of the product is or can be given back to the workers, not because the employers become philanthropists, but because this payoff is finally indispensable for enlarging the capacities of the “market” as production rises, and consequently for increasing the purchasing power of wage earners.¹⁴

Does this “compensation,” which causes the foolish to claim that the working class is becoming middle class, mean more freedom of consumption? On the contrary. There would be no end to an enumeration of the techniques that capitalism employs in order to be able to regulate consumption in such a way as to preserve the harmony of its system: the destruction of products through consumption currently attracts almost as much attention (market surveys, motivational research, consumption inquiries, etc.) as does their manufacture. And these studies do not aim only to adjust production to needs, they aim no less at constantly refitting needs to production (from both a qualitative and a quantitative viewpoint). This is to say that capitalism tries to incorporate the dynamic of needs ever more strictly within its global economic dynamic: this incorporation operates both in the form of prediction, henceforth indispensable to the functioning of the system, and in the form of a control effectively adjusting needs to production possibilities.

Thus an increased alienation in needs is added to alienation in the labor process. The needs we feel are less and less our needs, more and more anonymous needs, and the infallible symptom of this alienation is that the satisfaction of these needs does not procure a real pleasure. Many activities of consumption, on the contrary, become chores.¹⁵

But this behavior coincides perfectly with the functioning of the modern capitalist economy: it assures the full use of the labor force without its being necessary to employ constraint—by means of the simple self-determination of that force—and at the same time, it guarantees the full use of purchasing power. Thus the labor force is more and more caught up in the exclusive use of its capacity by the employers, and so it is that variable capital from now on incarnates itself in almost the entirety of the labor force available in society.

In the same sense, one of the notable results of economic expansion lies in the fact that social categories previously untouched by “modern life” are

proletarianized. That is, they are not impoverished, but abstracted from their traditional mode of working and consuming and subjected to the increased alienation we just described: this is the case for the peasants, particularly the young; this is the case for the shopkeepers and artisans. This movement sooner or later implies a homogenization of ways of living in France, which would already be appreciable from a comparison of the pattern of consumption of a contemporary peasant family with what it was twenty years ago.

But modern capitalism does not only overthrow habits of working and consuming, it profoundly transforms all human relations, that is, everyday life itself. The remoteness of the home in relation to the workplace (it would take too long here to examine the origin of this phenomenon) brings about a considerable extension of the time taken in commuting, that is, in indirect relation to production. Correlatively, the time devoted to familial life or private life in general is appreciably reduced, and new tensions in the relations between men and women, between parents and children evidently follow. These relations are more and more abbreviated, it is more and more difficult to share experiences, the familial community as such tends to pulverize itself, and the old idea according to which it is proper to "raise a family" loses all content when husband and wife see each other for two hours a day from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. (if there is no television), when the children are taken care of by the school, the canteen, homework, holiday camp. One of the fundamental values of traditional society crumbles away; the effect is that workers no longer find a relatively stable human milieu outside their work in which they can escape from the obsession with production—that they grasp themselves instead as isolated, that is, abandoned *individuals*—and that they lose, with the family, a goal in the conduct of everyday life.

More generally, a kind of anonymous human relation, which corresponds to the pulverization of the communities of the previous period, tends to develop: for example, the old neighborhood community, so important in the proletarian life of the nineteenth century, is broken up in the new dormitory suburbs where the occupants of the same building no longer know one another. The destruction of the stable familial and perifamilial entourage affects fundamental emotional attitudes. In the past, it was in this milieu that the choice of partners (friends, sexual partners) was traditionally carried out; today, this choice functions with ever greater difficulty. On the other hand, the fact that mixed labor becomes the rule favors the multiplication of precarious sexual and affective experiences and stabilizes a form of behavior consisting of *trying out* the other and oneself. This precariousness, when it concerns sexual relations, no doubt explains the French woman's attitude of anxiety, taking into account the prohibition of birth control, as well as her

reaction in the direction of security: for her, marriage offers above all the sense of a defense against anxiety, it takes place in conditions that make her sexual success problematic.

From all of this there results an increased relativization of human relations: individuals are immersed in a society that they endure rather than understand, not because it is unbounded, but because its overall meaning, the thing that guaranteed the tissue of values out of which everyday life was made, has disappeared, along with the feeling that it is possible to reconstitute this meaning. Whence proceeds cynicism in political matters, if politics is indeed the activity through which persons intend collectively to transform the meaning of their lives, whence proceeds the apparent indifference to and the real anxiety concerning the problems that overshadow the field of everyday life.

This overall attitude manifests itself particularly among the young (whose relative importance in France is considerable given the age pyramid). They are less inclined (and indeed less able) than anyone else to oppose the good conscience and the bad faith of political or sociological "explanations" borrowed from the previous period to this general crisis; the fraction of working and student youth that is politically organized is extremely weak. Their nonpoliticization is simply the general form taken by their nonadhesion to social values. Society such as it exists is incapable of offering the young the least reason to live, and it is only on this basis that one can understand the style common to the kids in black leather and the "hoodlums," the aesthetic of violence.

One finds oneself faced with an overall situation for which it would be superficial to want to impute responsibility to a particular factor. In gestation in France, but already constituted in other countries, this society is in its fundamental features neither the effect of a simple internal transformation of capitalism nor the unique result of the degeneration of workers' organizations, nor is it the sign of the extinction of the communist project in the proletariat.

One must not lose sight of the fact that the transformation of capitalism that led it to modify profoundly the relations in which exploitation takes place itself results from the workers' struggle. Through its wars and its "peaces," its "prosperities" and its recessions, the real history of capitalism is the history of a dominant class constrained by the proletariat constantly to revise the ensemble of its modes of domination. The workers have fought for a shorter working week, for security in production, for insurance, for wages, for vacations, for allocations, for administration; and the bourgeoisie, for a century, has not ceased to retreat, to make concessions. It has always tried to take them back, when the occasion has presented itself, when the working class was beaten down and divided. The workers had to begin the struggle again in order to regain what they had lost and in order to overcome the new

forms that the employers had given to exploitation. In a sense, the whole history of mechanization (if one excepts the relatively autonomous development of science and technology), the whole history of the forms of constraint in the factory and the office from the twelve-hour day to "human relations,"¹⁶ the whole history of political and juridical institutions, is only the succession of the results of the conflict between the communist project stirring up society and the exploitative function imposing its structure on it. These results are essentially unstable, they are never anything other than precarious compromises continually made between the two forces when they can no longer carry on the struggle further.

But this fundamental conflict, which animates all of capitalist society, contains a much more important significance if one places oneself within the workers' movement itself. In these everyday struggles as in its large-scale battles, the proletariat constantly encounters the opposition of institutions and organizations that it created, that it nourished, and that have become weapons in the hands of its adversary. The political or protest organizations with which it provided itself in order to put an end to exploitation, the institutions that were created out of its victories, are left in the sphere of the ruling class by the ebbing of the tide; they have been incorporated as so many organs of the functioning of class society, and in order to carry on its struggle, the proletariat has not only to undo the stranglehold of exploitation, it must furthermore unmask, denounce, and destroy its own works. Everything that is institutionalized in a class society becomes a class institution. All activity in the past tense becomes a passivity, not through some kind of curse, some kind of burden that weighs on mankind, but simply because the ruling class assimilates it, makes it into *its* institution, turns it against those same ones who have acted and weighs them down with it. That is its function as an exploiting and alienating class: to place humanity in the past tense, in the passive mood.

This process of ruling-class takeover of the organizations and institutions whose meaning was originally proletarian attains its height in contemporary capitalism. More than ever, the bosses assimilate the forms of struggle, of resistance, that belong to the humanity they exploit and use these forms as intermediaries between themselves and the workers. Wage increases become the means of enlarging the market and of avoiding the old crises, the "frank" (face to face)¹⁷ discussions between employers and wage earners allow the leadership to inform itself about worker opinion and to control it, employers responsibility for vacations allows them to enforce even the modes of workers' leisure, the extension of schooling makes possible the diffusion of a completely mystifying culture, the ruling class's claim to resolve the problem of housing for the workers provides it with the means of controlling even the use of familial space. The unions are on the road to integration in the hierarchy of

the factory and the office, the “workers” parties are on the road to integration in the sphere of the bourgeois state. No doubt the process is less complete than in some countries of modern capitalism such as the United States, Sweden, or Germany; no doubt there are still specific obstacles in France (essentially the nature of the Communist party) opposed to the complete incorporation of the former workers’ organizations into the institutions of the society of exploitation. But the phenomenon does not differ qualitatively between France and these countries.

It is in this political vacuum, older than Gaullism, that the Gaullist state has been able to institute itself. And it maintains this vacuum. The concrete conditions of everyday life that are given to the workers are not the causes of depoliticization, any more than depoliticization is *their* cause, but there is a social totality that is present and expresses itself in each of its parts: in the forms of the exploitation of labor and in the forms of consumption, in the cooperation of the “workers” leaderships with the class state and in the indifference of the workers toward these leaderships, in the pulverization of individuals, and in the brief and resolute struggles they carry on sporadically in the firms.

The workers no longer give life to their organizations through their struggles (the organizations detach themselves from them—become bureaucracies—incorporate themselves into the structure of class society—the ruling class tries to use them as intermediaries—the proletariat withdraws itself from them even more—the bourgeoisie increases its exploitation) but through the organizations and the institutions that had produced the proletariat, in underhanded forms. One can read this sequence in either direction—there is no absolute beginning, there is totalization. Muffled totalitarianism is this control by the leaders of the whole wage-earning population in all its activities, which takes place thanks to the organizations that the proletariat had imposed through its former struggles.

It is thus proletarian political life itself that is alienated, that is displaced from its own class in hybrid organisms (in that their genesis is worker and their function bourgeois or bureaucratic), that is seized by the ruling class. The very idea of a global political project is immediately neutralized in the workers’ own heads. Incredulity, lassitude, and irony keep an exploited class in step much more effectively than open violence.

Assuredly, the proletariat was always worked upon from the inside by the ideology of class society, and the essential element of this work was always to convince it that it was not itself *a class*, that it was not this communist project. It would be a pleasant simplification, and an enormous political error, to conceive of proletarian political life as a pure development toward socialism, as a project never contested in itself by the fact of its

existence in class society. But in the preceding period an important section of the workers organized themselves against the assault of the dominant ideology, banded together, counterattacked, and through this very counterattack broke the “spell” of the mystification for themselves and for everybody. Today, there are no signs of the birth and explicit organization of this activity of contestation of class society: the proletariat is no longer present in society as manifest political will. This is not to say that the communist project has been annihilated and that the dominant class has succeeded for all time in its task of reifying the workers. On the contrary, the inability of the ruling class to offer the society that it claims to govern a direction, a sense, values, reasons for doing and being what this society is and does has never been clearer, never has its incapacity to ground a really social life broken into the open as completely as today. This is what we tried to sketch out, very briefly, a while ago. More than a century ago, it is true that the proletariat was not the object of “a particular tort, but of a tort in itself.”¹⁸ But the problem posed by this profound erosion of activities and ideals is precisely that of how to know *how*, by *what means* the revolutionary project can henceforth express itself, organize itself, fight.

A certain idea of politics dies in this society. Certainly, neither the “democratization of the regime,” called for by unemployed politicians, nor the creation of a “large unified socialist party” (which will only regroup the refuse of the “left”) can give life to this idea. Such notions lack perspective, are minuscule in relation to the real dimensions of the crisis. It is now time for revolutionaries to measure up to the revolution to be made.

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Gaullism and Algeria

(1961)

De Gaulle on March 5, 1960: “an Algerian Algeria.” On November 4: “an Algerian republic.” On April 11, 1961: “a sovereign Algerian state.”

On June 10, 1960, Si Salah comes to the Elysée Palace.¹ On June 14, de Gaulle calls for negotiation. From June 25 to 29, Franco-Algerian discussions begin at Melun. They break off abruptly.

December 1960: the Algerians demonstrate en masse in favor of the FLN in all the cities.

Insofar as “politics” is a theatrical production, the French stage has not changed its program over the past year. The president presides, the French carry on the business at hand.

But in relation to the problems that de Gaulle’s rule had to solve, the French situation has appreciably changed: the failures that have accumulated over a few months weigh more and more heavily against the regime.

Finally, at another level, the most important one, the one at which the question Who makes history? is continually posed, a profound shift in positions has occurred. Like all Western imperialisms, more even than any other, the French state has not only given way, piling concessions on concessions in the face of the immense uprising of the peoples under its governance, but in this struggle it has also completely lost its monopoly on initiative.

It is the war in Algeria that has opened up communications between these three levels—that of official policy, that of the problems of capitalism, that of the class struggle—but it takes different meanings in each of them. It is a stable element of the stage set on which the political drama plays itself out. Yet the war is also the most bitter failure, and the hardest to disguise, in the most extremely urgent task that the Fifth Republic had to accomplish. Lastly, it is already six years since the war changed its character: the unanswered challenge thrown out by a handful of fellahs to one of the world’s leading

capitalisms now becomes an episode, one of the last, one of the bloodiest, one of the most exemplary, but an episode in the irreversible history of decolonization.

For some months, the covering in which imperialism has enveloped the world has been fraying, worn out in some places, pierced in others. The struggles engaged in on the one hand by Korean, Japanese, and Turkish students and on the other hand by the Cuban and Algerian revolutions do not have an identical social content, nor consequently is the defeat suffered by Western capitalism in these different countries of the same importance. But there is defeat everywhere. And above all, the positive group significance of these movements breaks out openly: those who have been *objects* in world politics, in the history of humanity—these peoples who did not exist except by virtue of their strategic situation, their mineral resources, or the picturesque quality of their artists—have achieved subjectivity. They say “we”; they disrupt the calculations of the chancellery; they constrain the “great powers” to rethink, dismantle, and reformulate their tactics once more at top speed; they undertake a formidable struggle for control of the United Nations.

Autonomy has already been the true meaning of the Algerians’ struggle for years: they were victorious as soon as they took their fate into their own hands, along with their weapons. In the present context, this struggle thus has an exemplary significance: all of Asia, all of Africa, all of Latin America recognize themselves in it, despite all ideological divergences. This war gathers to itself and exacerbates the thrust of these peoples not only against Western domination, but more profoundly against the monopolization of “humanity” by Europe.

Previously, the Algerians’ struggle remained relatively isolated. De Gaulle was assured of a kind of monopoly over the settlement of the question. On the other hand, the détente between the two blocs incited Khrushchev to Paris gently in an attempt to breach NATO unity. Lastly, the African countries were still too few and too dependent on France to be able to support the GPRA [provisional Algerian government], which could only find an eventual opening through the impotent Arab League. All these elements tended to keep the problem, if not Algeria itself, in the sphere of French policy-making.

From now on, Algeria is no longer a French problem. Paris had already admitted this verbally by agreeing to the principle of self-determination. But apart from the speechmaking, and despite de Gaulle’s intentions, reality has confirmed that the problem eludes French capitalism: the breakdown of the Melun talks and the emptiness of the conference of September 5 attest to this new situation.

Two implications of this observation should be emphasized. The breakdown of talks has been presented uniquely as the doing of the Elysée Palace, of its intransigence. But if relations were broken off, it was also because the GPRA did not want to capitulate, because the Algerians had not been conquered, because the degree of the masses' participation in the struggle remained as high as ever. After January 24 and the round of "stay-at-homes" [*popotes*], de Gaulle definitely intended to use his victory over the extreme right in order to negotiate, but in such a way as not to multiply the "anxieties" of the military (which he had observed on the spot), that is to say, by obtaining the equivalent of a military surrender from the ALN. This strategy was supposed to find an understanding partner in the Algerian petite bourgeoisie. It was a false calculation on two counts.

First, the Frontist leadership resisted this attempt at division by strengthening its unity. Thus it has been proved that not only are the Algerian petit bourgeois elements (the "liberals") devoid of any autonomous force, any power to win over the masses, but also that even within the Front members originating from this class had been completely absorbed so as not to form a genuinely distinct political tendency. This is an extremely important fact, because it means that in independent Algeria the bourgeoisie will probably not hold power in Western "democratic" forms. It is moreover clear that this prospect depends upon the capacity of French capitalism to come to a compromise with the GPRA. One can then understand the desperate attempt made by Bourguiba to help out de Gaulle and to give life to the "liberal" faction of the Front, for example, in forming a unified government by means of which the Tunisian bourgeoisie could bring its full weight to bear on the Algerian bureaucracy. Whatever the fate of this project is, it is a safe bet that the maneuver will fail: Bourguiba's prestige does not match up to the revolutionary potential that the FLN holds for the North African masses.

Second, the "worries" of the army cannot be so easily calmed. A long time has passed since the army was an instrument dedicated to its official purpose of disarming rebels. Even if it had achieved a military victory, which is not the case and which would have absolutely no meaning in this instance, it would nonetheless have remained a social force managing or claiming to manage the Algerian countryside and suburbs. In particular, a military surrender by the resistance would not be enough for it if the Front must subsequently be recognized by Paris as an official political force and given the right, by way of the ballot box, to stake a claim to govern Algerian affairs.

The longer the war continues, the more Algeria becomes, in the eyes of the army, the test of its own role, the justification of its existence. Displacing the officers of Algeria is not at all a simple strategic problem of troop deployment, it is a social problem, that of the replacement of the administrative class, which is to say, the major problem of a crisis. De Gaulle has not until now

had the power to resolve this problem, but it is also clear that this situation weighs heavily on the actions and on the perspectives of the regime in France.

Along with the persistence of the war come the defeats encountered by the Gaullist state in all directions. Of course economic growth continues, only slowed down by the reduction of foreign markets and the threat of recession in the United States: in this sphere, the French bourgeoisie only encounters “technical” difficulties, in the sense that it possesses the means to resolve them; one can anticipate, moreover, that the unions will support wage claims, claims whose satisfaction would permit, when all is said and done, a reinvigoration of the productive sectors that have been most affected.

But the large tasks of the “rationalization” of social structures have not even been begun: they barely exist in the form of a project in the files of the Rueff-Armand Committee.² Decisive measures are yet to be taken either on the agricultural question or with regard to distribution. The program and the people exist, and if one examines the propositions made by the aforementioned committee, one will have confirmation of the assessment of Gaullism as an expression of big capital’s attempt to rationalize its domination over society. But what slows down this attempt is the impossibility of putting into place new political structures that might amount to such a rationalization.

Let us leave aside foreign policy where there has been a general failure in European as well as in Atlantic or global affairs. In the domestic sphere, the possibility of Gaullism rested on the benevolent neutrality of the population as a whole—lacking a strongly constructed party that would have allowed him to inform himself about public opinion and to act accordingly, de Gaulle could base his power only on an atmosphere. But this atmosphere itself only existed conditionally [*sous bénéfice d’inventaire*] in public opinion. Today it is easy to draw up an inventory [*inventaire*] of this atmosphere: young soldiers continue to leave for Algeria, purchasing power has dropped since 1958, the margin between production costs and retail prices is still as wide, and it is less and less possible to express oneself.

As a result of this, the breach between state power and the country has widened. Parliament’s function has been reduced to nothing; the government itself has been literally doubled by a system of commissions staffed by de Gaulle’s personal advisers; no party has managed to fill the void that lies between the Elysée Palace and the population as a whole. The only means the state possesses is sorcery, but nowadays that only works on the old Bretons.

Thus, the longer a solution to the different problems posed to French capitalism is delayed, in particular as the war of Algeria continues, the more

the different tendencies that French capitalism had tried to win over or neutralize resume their centrifugal movement. There are a thousand political expressions of this agonizing struggle, which it would be tedious to enumerate. The same contradictions that undermined the Fourth Republic and that Gaullism had blocked are coming back to life; but this is still not yet the most important matter.

The great majority of workers have remained passive since May 13: the solution of the war of Algeria seemed to them to be too much for them. The actions undertaken by the proletariat here and there since the beginning of this year have remained essentially protest struggles in their aims and forms. The only truly significant fact in this country over the past year is that a section of its youth, still weak, primarily intellectual, but also working, has undertaken to resolve for itself the situation in which the war in Algeria has placed it.

For itself because, taken literally and in its origins, the refusal of military service by a few draftees cannot in itself constitute a solution or a sketch of a solution to the war, nor an exemplary political activity; what the draft dodger refuses is *his* participation in the war. But it would be more than hypocritical to be indignant at such an individualism: if the Communist party and the noncommunist left had not for six years driven the young to despair by opposing only pious wishes and votes of confidence in the army to the sending of troops to Algeria, insubordination would doubtless not seem like a solution.

But if it is true that the current of refusal has its origins in the stagnation of the parties, in the degeneration of the proletarian traditions of internationalist solidarity and anticolonialism, it cannot be reduced to a set of sporadic acts of despair. That would be a failure to recognize that the reporting of these acts has aroused a new public concern with the question of Algeria, the war, and the institutions. One cannot but note that as a result of these individual decisions, a rather large segment of youth has started to consider its relation to the war of Algeria as something other than a detestable inevitability. Future draftees ponder what course to follow; students' discussions are obsessed with this problem. The intellectuals' declaration and the trial of the Jeanson network have given this attitude a new publicity along with a larger significance: one sees peaceable novelists and honest clerks of the state publicly acknowledge that, when all is said and done, military duty is not an unquestionable obligation and that in fighting against the French army the Algerians are struggling for freedom. In the Cherche-Midi trial, the accused and their defenders have reopened the dossier on torture by calling on several witnesses whom the prosecution itself cannot impeach, thus declaring and justifying their practical solidarity with the Algerians.³ The measures of

repression immediately taken by the government obviously revive the affair: protests multiply and even sectors of public opinion that had until then remained silent take up positions on the issue.

All this is certainly not revolution. Insofar as this movement will not reach the working masses, were it only in the form of the participation of a minority of employees and workers, the challenge it poses will touch only the most obvious forms of oppression and exploitation. The workers represent an immense force because a total challenge to society is inscribed in their condition. This force can be aroused by the initiatives of the young, by the appeals of the intellectuals, on the condition that the workers do not content themselves with waiting for instructions to come from on high, but in their turn take up the initiative in the action.

For, as I remarked, the important feature is that a section of French youth has attempted to solve its problem *on its own*. For years the young have been condemned to the following choice: either play with the rattle offered by the parties under the name of politics or completely lose interest. In any case, they ended up leaving for the war, which is to say that their fate did not change, whether or not they were political. Their current refusal of this choice turns out to be the most effective policy because after this everything starts to shift, including the organizations most respectful of legality.

There is evidently a profound affinity between the concrete decision to refuse the war, minoritarian and isolated though it is, and the wider movement of decolonization that makes the initiative change hands on the global scale. In both cases, established powers, traditions, values, and behaviors so deeply rooted that they passed as natural are all contested, refuted by simple acts. Of course, when it is the Cuban or Algerian peasants, workers, and intellectuals who carry out this upheaval, it is a revolution because in the end there is no longer any power other than that which issues from their force. When it is the Korean or Turkish students, it is a revolt, which a liberal bourgeoisie or the army can take over for its own benefit. When it is one-thousandth of the French draft, it is only a hint, the echo of these revolts, of these revolutions in a modern country overwhelmed by the “good life.” But this statistical nothing disrupts all the positions.

Since the autumn, the situation in France has begun to change in an important regard: the people’s attitude toward the war in Algeria. De Gaulle’s press conference of September 5, in which he appeared to be completely divorced from all reality; the movement of insurrection; the Jeanson network trial and the facts for which it provided judicial confirmation through the testimony under oath of high officials confirming torture in Algeria; the Manifesto of the 121 and the sanctions taken against its signatories—all these events played

the role of catalysts of an awakening of public opinion that had been developing since spring.

This awakening is still limited to a relatively small section of the population; it is especially strong among the students. This explains why it was the national students' union that took the initiative of a public demonstration "for negotiated peace in Algeria." It is certain, in particular, that in the working class the will to act against the continuation of the war remains weak. This is the reason why the improbable maneuvers of the Communist party were relatively successful in their attempt to sabotage the demonstration. The number of demonstrators on October 27 was small for a city like Paris, and few workers participated in it. But the Communist party suffered a bitter defeat among the students: hardly more than two hundred communist students agreed to dissociate themselves from their comrades and meet peacefully at the Sorbonne, while the others went to be beaten up by the police. This shows that the split between Thorez's old bureaucratic apparatus and young people will only get deeper.

This does not preclude the October 27 demonstration from having marked a real step forward, and on several accounts. Taking into account the diversionary maneuvers of the Communist party and the CGT [French communist trade union], taking into account also the inevitability of fighting with the police, the gathering of fifteen thousand demonstrators is in no way negligible; and their number made the several hundred fascist counter-demonstrators look ridiculous in comparison. An important proportion of the participants showed that, for them, to demonstrate was to demonstrate and not to disperse peacefully after having heard uplifting speeches. The best thing about the demonstration, in other words, is that it took place, that for the first time in years a section of the population and especially of the youth showed its unwillingness to continue to accept passively the fate offered to it by the government. Its weakest point was its political content. The demonstrators cried "Peace in Algeria," "Down with the war," "Stop the torture," "Negotiation." Almost no one called for the independence of Algeria; no one called into question the regime responsible for the war.

No doubt this beginning of mass activity against the war in Algeria played a role in the shift evident between de Gaulle's declarations on September 5 and his speech on November 4. It came on top of a multiplication and acceleration of the signs of an irreversible deterioration in the situation of French imperialism. The failure at Melun, far from weakening the FLN, had reinforced the Algerians' will to struggle and destroyed any remaining illusions concerning de Gaulle. The Chinese and Russian promises of assistance to the FLN threaten to materialize in the near future. This prospect incites other Western powers, and especially the Americans, to increase their pressure on the French

government in order to obtain a speedy resolution of the Algerian problem. Finally, the chimerical character of de Gaulle's attempt, whether serious or not, to arouse an Algerian "third force" was resoundingly demonstrated; barely had they assembled when the "commissions of the elected" (chosen, as one knows, by the administration) began to call for negotiations with the FLN, while elected Muslim members in the UNR [Gaullists] did the same.

The speech of November 4 both reflects the new reverse imposed on French imperialism by all these factors and at the same time creates a new situation. The new overtures aiming at negotiations with the FLN, barely a few weeks after the idea of a "new Melun" had been categorically rejected, is not the most important thing. The most important thing is that French imperialism, through de Gaulle's intervention, after self-determination and *Algérie algérienne*, has explicitly recognized that Algeria will be independent, and cannot do more than express the wish and the hope that the future Algerian Republic will maintain "ties with France." The bridges have henceforth been burned. There is no possible turning back.

The discourse creates a new situation in the international sphere: it may well be that it will calm down the next discussions in the United Nations, but it is from now on officially recognized that Algeria is not a French domestic affair. In France itself, it first of all makes clear to everyone's eyes the absurdity of continuing the war. It constitutes on the other hand and above all a formal demand to the activist elements of the army to submit or to rebel openly.

This, of course, does not mean that the speech of November 4, nor even the referendum planned for the beginning of 1961, resolves the Algerian problem. In order to get out of its present situation, the government in Paris must first impose its will on the army of Algeria; it must then come to terms with the FLN. One knows that these two requirements are in conflict.

It is not a matter here of playing the prophet. But already, certain points are settled.

First, all Bao-Daism is out of the question in Algeria.⁴ There is no section of the bourgeoisie or the Muslim cadres that is disposed, like Bao-Dai in Indochina, to play the role of an "independent" government and to take political responsibility for the war against the FLN. The Muslim *Gaullist* deputies themselves call for negotiation. This shows that there can only be an "Algerian republic" with the FLN.

Second, a new regime (resulting, for example, from a coup d'état by the extreme right wing section of the army) that would try to turn back the clock in relation to de Gaulle's government would encounter not only an immense and probably active opposition in France itself, but also the total hostility of the outside world and would almost certainly have to face up to a combined Russian-American intervention to stop the war. The result of its coming to power would certainly be to *accelerate* the independence of Algeria. This

shows that an attempt by the extreme right to seize power is highly improbable, a successful attempt even more unlikely.

Third, the projected referendum reveals the paradoxical situation in which French capitalism finds itself. With its army and its state apparatus infiltrated by groups that oppose official policy and openly sabotage it, it is obliged to call on "the people" against its own instruments of power. The government has to prove its legitimacy anew, after having ridiculed the Parliament, which should have been the source of that legitimacy. This shows that the problem of how capitalist political institutions are to function normally has not been resolved by the Fifth Republic.

But, once again, for those who oppose the war and recognize in the Algerian people's struggle for their independence a just and positive struggle, the question is not one of speculating on what de Gaulle can or cannot do. What de Gaulle "has done" up to now, he has only done under the constraint of the invincible resistance of the Algerians; and also, in a sadly infinitely smaller measure, under the constraint of the beginnings of an active opposition to the war that is developing in France. A rapid end to the war and, furthermore, the true content of Algerian independence will be a function of the development of this opposition. The weaker French imperialism is at home, the less it will be able to try to impose, through peace, its exploitative interests on the Algerian people. Opinion must be enlightened in France, not only about torture and the atrocities of the war (or about its inconveniences for the French) but above all about the real content of the Algerians' struggle—a political content, but also an economic, social, and human one. Opposition to the war must be demonstrated actively in the universities and the factories. The masses must impose the only solution to the war: the unconditional independence of Algeria.

33

Algeria: Seven Years After (1962)

In July 1961, the Tunisians attack the French garrison of Bizerta. The National Council of the Algerian Revolution (CNRA) meeting in Tripoli in August names Ben Khedda as president of the GPRA [Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic]. In September, de Gaulle agrees to include the question of the status of the Sahara in the negotiations.

On October 17, 1961, the Algerians demonstrate in the streets of Paris, peacefully and without arms: several hundred dead. On December 19, an anti-OAS [the extreme right wing French Secret Army Organization] demonstration in Paris: a hundred injured.

Never, in the seven years during which the Algerians have fought against French imperialism, has French imperialism gone so far in making concessions, at least verbal ones. Seven years ago it seemed impossible that a French government would ever recognize the independence of the departments of Algeria and the sovereignty of an Algerian government over the Saharan “territories.” In order to obtain this recognition, it took a million dead, a million deported into concentration camps, hundreds of thousands of émigrés in Tunisia and Morocco, tens of thousands of militants and non-militants arrested, tortured, interned, liquidated.¹ By these means de Gaulle has discovered that *his* interest lies in abandoning Algeria. Has the cause therefore been understood?

In no way. De Gaulle really wants to leave, but first he demands to be thanked: assuredly a peculiarity of character, but one that suffices to hold up the talks aimed at “disengagement.” This is, however, not the essential element. The military and civil administration cannot withdraw from Algeria in the way that one gets off a train. Its relative autonomy has existed for a long time, as have its administrative functions. Its withdrawal therefore presupposes its adherence to de Gaulle’s doctrine. And next, were this condition fulfilled,

it would still be necessary to think about “disengaging” the Europeans of Algeria, too, whose autonomy and implantation date back more than a hundred years.

Imperialism is not only an interest of de Gaulle: it is also the apparatus that colonization has used and uses to crush a people over a period of one hundred and thirty years and its revolt for seven years. Imperialism is also the European population that capitalism has installed in this country, endowed with privileges of all kinds, which has retained the mentality of another age. Imperialism is not only the balance of its present interests, it is what presently remains of its past interests, of which it cannot rid itself.

All the compromises can indeed be agreed on with the FLN [Algerian National Liberation Front]; not a single one of them can be realized if Paris does not have the means to impose it on the army and on the Europeans of Algeria.

First, the army has not been won over by Gaullism: Paris has obliged it, day after day, to give up its “successes.” Gaullism, for the army, is this insidious defeat, whose meaning it is beginning to realize, and that demoralizes it. The results it had been able to obtain in the military sphere were annulled by the ceasing of offensive operations last spring and by the transfer of two shock divisions back to France; domestically, the ALN [Algerian National Liberation Army] was able to reconstitute its groups in all the areas where police control and the mobile commandos had forced it to disperse. Even at the eastern and western cordons the situation changed: one may assume that the GPRA seized the occasion offered by the Tunisian attack on Bizerta to arrange for heavy matériel to be stocked in Tunisia and Morocco.²

In the political sphere, the order to disperse the “concentrated” populations interrupted the contact of the army with the peasant masses. The formerly forbidden zones are now under the sole command of the Frontist administration. The administrative functions of French posts have taken a back seat to police and defense matters.

The various resistances, and finally the April 1961 putsch, arose from this situation, that of an apparatus constrained to abandon its function without any compensation: neither that of having accomplished its task, nor that of having to adapt itself to a new task. But the failure of Challe’s attempt caused the army to lose its hope of modifying Gaullist politics by remaining in a state of semiloyalty.³ The sabotage and the open resistance to the draft taught the cadres not only about general opinion in France, but also that they would not have the troops in place required for a military coup d'état.

No doubt a faction among the officers and petty officers finds a solution in participating in the actions of the OAS. But it can only be weak in the units, where offensive activity is impossible because of the draft: above all, the activist cadres desert, which shows that the army is not the OAS. One conspires more easily in the General Staffs, but it is without real importance.

In the majority, the forces wait: they cannot be Gaullists, and they consider that an autonomous initiative from the army is destined to failure; finally, they do not want to link their fate to that of the OAS activists. They content themselves therefore with carrying out routine operations without hoping to defeat the ALN; they oppose and will oppose a certain degree of inertia to any initiative from Paris. In particular, it is out of the question that the army can be heavily engaged in the repression of the OAS and more generally in an operation to bring the Europeans of Algeria to heel. Nor indeed can one imagine the army collaborating with the battalions of the ALN to maintain order in a transition period. Paris is sufficiently aware of this to have tried to create an Algerian "police force" for the latter purpose. Likewise, to control the Europeans, Paris draws almost exclusively on the gendarmes and the riot police.

The civil representatives of the French state apparatus in Algeria seem no less disenchanted. The absence of precise orders and the loss of contact with the Algerian population have deprived them of both the aim of their mission and the means to carry it out. In the police, each clique avenges its dead: the extreme right wingers continue the struggle against the FLN; the "republican" commissars who are still alive try to hunt down the OAS. The prefectoral or municipal administration, isolated in a few old colonial villages deserted by the Europeans, lets the Front's propagandists and revenue collectors operate almost openly; the Muslim mayors and subprefects consult the nationalist organization on local policy. On the other hand, in certain urban quarters, under pressure from the French colonists, the administration closes its eyes to lynchings, its men pay taxes to the OAS and let them be paid, kangaroo courts replace the legal system for criminal and even civil affairs. For their part, the economic services record not only the stagnation of the Constantine plan, but also a general paralysis that causes the exodus of profits and capital, the exile of a part of the European population and the hoarding that results from anxiety.⁴

The French state apparatus in Algeria as a whole presents the appearance of an organization shrinking on the spot, leaving behind it two communities that polarize ever more energetically around their respective organizations.

The extremist officers drew negative conclusions from April 1961: the army cannot be the instrument of the policy of *Algérie française*; Challe's kind of

semilegal activity is impossible. They therefore positively organized the only force opposed to both the Algerian liberation struggle and the Gaullist policy of disengagement: the Europeans. They have set about building an illegal counterrevolutionary apparatus out of this group. Former extreme right wing organizations were broken down into compartmentalized action groups and absorbed into a single hierarchy. Operations of intimidation, intoxication, and terrorism were directed against hesitant Europeans and the administration. For the street demonstrations, the young and the students were organized into commandos and trained. Funds are collected in the same way as by the FLN. Channels exist to handle deserters and important individuals. This organization crystallizes the lessons that the military cadres have drawn from their experience in the war of repression on the colonial front over the past fifteen years, and for the first time the organization finds favorable terrain among a population predisposed on all counts to support it.

The OAS therefore constitutes a serious obstacle to de Gaulle's policy. It tends to usurp the official administration in the cities where Europeans are numerous. It manages to keep many military and civil cadres sitting on the fence. Infiltrated into the police and military apparatus, the OAS blunts any attempts to suppress it.

Nevertheless, the activists have no prospects of taking the *offensive*. An *Algérie française* government would have the support of the whole European population, but would not be able to maintain itself after secession. The problem therefore remains, as the failure of the April putsch showed, one of liaison with the metropole. The army's current attitude makes a military coup impossible, as we have seen. It remains to be seen whether the difficulties encountered by the regime in France can serve as the springboard for a more or less covert action on the part of the OAS.

Until it manages to extend its influence to the metropole in this way, the OAS holds a defensive trump card in Algeria: it can use, and it already uses, the blackmail tactic of threatening a confrontation between the communities, a "blood bath," a "Congolization" of Algeria. Rightly or wrongly, it can thus hope to participate as a third party in the negotiations over the future of the country, or at least to influence them and to lay the groundwork for its domination in the areas where Europeans may regroup in the future.

But the prospects glimpsed by the parties at hand, like the hypotheses one can construct about them, remain subordinate to the orientation that the Front intends to impose on the Algerians' struggle. The GPRA seems in effect to hold the key to the situation, depending on whether it will support de Gaulle against the OAS or whether it will attack all expressions of imperialism indifferently, be they peripheral or central.

The GPRA could lend tactical support to the policy of withdrawal by launching its own secret organization against the OAS, and it could also lend political support by reaching an accord with Paris on the transition period as quickly as possible. Do not de Gaulle and the GPRA have a common adversary in the OAS? But that is an absurd hypothesis: its apparent logic ignores the coherence of the reasons and passions at work. To be brief, the Algerians are struggling to free themselves from imperialism, and imperialism, even as a new order, remains for them a situation of dependence more or less maintained by 50,000 soldiers, by camps, prisons, deportations, imprisonments, interrogations, and, in the last instance, by Paris. In comparison with this, the OAS seems all the more like a caricature of provocation. Moreover, the FLN has no tactical interest in really weakening the activists, that is, in reinforcing de Gaulle, until he makes irreversible concessions regarding independence, sovereignty over the Sahara, the fate of the Europeans, the organization of the transition period, and his own representative status.

We cannot therefore expect cooperation between the ALN and a distinct "Algerian force," let alone the French army, before these concessions provide the guarantee that French imperialism will abandon Algeria for good. Meanwhile, the struggle will continue. It is even probable that it will intensify, at least in Algeria, where, as we have noted, the military situation favors the Algerian combatants even more than before, and where the implantation of the militants in the cities seems stronger than ever.

This is not to say that the GPRA refuses to negotiate; on the contrary, it can hope to gain concessions from the present weakness of Gaullism and from the fact that the Front is the only force capable of really opposing the activists. But it will enter the negotiations with its intransigence on principles intact. It is no longer the supplicant.⁵

This orientation shows how much the insurrection has been transformed, since 1954, in two complementary and antagonistic directions. Its popular base has been enlarged from year to year, and its program has been enriched by the experience gained in the struggle and by the contribution of the new social groups and new generations. The small clandestine nuclei of the beginning have become a formal hierarchical apparatus that reaches into all the activities of the Algerian population but that, because of its structure, can only weakly disseminate these changes. There have indeed been signs of this transformation for years; the most recent, even if it is not the most important by a long way, is the replacement of Abbas by Ben Khedda as president of the GPRA.

We have already explained the massive entry of the new Algerian generation into the political struggle proper and the tension that this necessarily caused between the "new wave" and the leadership. In renewing the staff of the

GPRA, its leaders wanted to reply to this relative independence of their base as much as to the failure of the Evian and Lugrin negotiations. Ben Khedda is certainly not a new man nor the incarnation of the Algerian younger generation. But Abbas was a classic bourgeois politician who had come belatedly to the movement, while the new president is an organization man par excellence. He has occupied positions of responsibility in the Front ever since its creation. His experience is that of a "professional revolutionary." His ideology, which allows him to combine Islamic references with a bow to the "socialist" countries, seems completely eclectic. Finally, his promotion was probably the result of a struggle between factions within the GPRA and even the CNRA.

But all these particularities are so many signs of a single reaction: confronted with the failure of the negotiations, with the dynamism of the young Algerians of the cities, with the hesitation of the unions (notably in the French Federation), the Frontist apparatus replied by reinforcing itself, by eliminating the members it had not trained entirely itself, by according first place to a man in whom it could incarnate itself without reservation. Ben Khedda's eclecticism confirms this interpretation: it faithfully expresses the FLN's ideological uncertainty, but it was also an indispensable condition for obtaining a majority among the members of the CNRA and the GPRA. The factional struggles, at times political and at times personal, can presently only differentiate themselves through compromises. Eclecticism is the ideological transcription of practical compromise.

One can therefore expect that the radical requirements latent in the young generation and the "Marxisant" tendencies of the unions will not yet have a chance to express themselves through the present leadership. This leadership is going to reinforce the unity of the apparatus by simplifying and controlling internal relations. It will reinstitute its authority everywhere, in particular in the French Union Federation and the union and student organizations, it will train and more closely supervise the Algerian population by multiplying its agitators and propagandists, it will equip the ALN in exile with heavy matériel and turn it into the nucleus of a regular army, and it will tighten links with other anticolonial movements.

What this orientation means is that the consolidation of the apparatus destined to train and supervise the masses during the next stage, the stage of the construction of a new Algerian society, ought to be undertaken without delay and given the same level of importance as the struggle for national liberation. The elimination of the nationalist bourgeoisie is thus assured. The latter needed a rapid compromise with imperialism in order to establish its authority and to restrict the struggle to a strictly nationalist framework, just as imperialism needed this bourgeoisie in order to reach a compromise: this course of events is now impossible. This is not to say that Ben Khedda is Mao

Tse-tung—but it only takes a Fidel Castro to make imperialism retreat. From this point of view, the question of knowing who, from among the bourgeoisie or the local bureaucracy, will finally take over the leadership of the struggle is already settled. But what remains to be resolved is the question of the training and supervision of the masses, that is, of the reinforcement of the bureaucracy in relation to the most dynamic groups of the population.

The strengthening of the apparatus is not an independent fact: on the contrary, it is the translation of more intensive activity and stronger pressure from the Algerian masses. This translation is a betrayal of the masses in that it transposes their strength into the language of the bureaucracy. If it was necessary to reinforce the apparatus, this is because it was weakening, not in relation to the struggle against imperialism, but in relation to the developing experience and political, social, and historical consciousness among all classes of the population, among workers, women, and the young. The repression and replies to the repression have been the matter of everyday life for the past seven years: the questions that arise in this life and the responses that can be given them are likewise the object of everyday reflection. There are now no Algerians who do not have views on all the problems of their society, who do not have more or less obscurely in their heads and almost in their flesh a certain image of the society that ought to be constructed, simply because the duration and the intensity of the struggle have forced extensive experience upon them.

This upheaval in traditional consciousness and this accumulation of experiences, including that of modern production for the Algerians who worked in France, together constitute a difficult fact for the leaders of tomorrow to master. By reinforcing the apparatus, the latter seek (even if they are not conscious of this) to channel the living forces of the future society while the liberation struggle allows them to require and obtain almost unconditional support; this will doubtless prove less easy during the next stage. Thus the class struggle in independent Algeria is prefigured, even before imperialism has released its grip.

34

Algeria Evacuated (1963)

On February 8, 1962, a new anti-OAS [Secret Army Organization] demonstration in Paris: nine dead at the Charonne Métro station. On March 18, 1962, the Evian agreement is reached; on the 19th, a cease-fire in Algeria. The OAS gives the order for strike action. On March 23, the OAS opens fire on the forces of order. On March 26, the shooting of the rue d'Isly.

On April 8, the Evian agreement is approved in a referendum by 90.7 percent of the vote. On the 14th, Debré resigns and Pompidou becomes prime minister. On the 20th, Salan is arrested in Algiers.

On July 1, a referendum is held in Algeria on independence. Independence is proclaimed on July 3. The GPRA [Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic] enters Algiers.

The analysis that follows does not aim to define a revolutionary policy in Algeria. The question of this country's fate can no longer be and has not yet been asked in this way. No *longer*, because the momentum that animated the masses in the course of the nationalist struggle is now gone; no revolution took place. *Not yet*, because the problems that assail the workers, which the present leadership's policy is incapable of resolving, will end by making conditions ripe for a new intervention by the masses; the revolution remains to be made.

The present task is this: to engage once more in a reading of the events that have marked the first months of independence, to unravel their meaning, to chase away the thick clouds of all kinds in which the Algerian question remains enveloped, to aid the revolutionary nucleus to see clearly both the chances that the coming crisis will offer it and the limitations that that crisis will oppose to it.

The picture that Algeria offers after independence is, one will see, remarkable in one respect: political life has become foreign to the population of the cities and the countryside. This attitude is thrown into even sharper relief in that during the years of the liberation struggle, the participation of the peasants, the workers, the students, the women, and the young not only never failed, but went so far as to produce the demonstrations of December 1960 and deepened so as to overthrow traditional social relations. Independence broke this immense agitation. Politics flowed back into the organizations or what remained of them. While the factions struggled for power, the phantom of unemployment and famine already haunted the people of the countryside and the cities.

But the most pressing questions of everyday life were not asked in the course of the battles over power in which the cliques engaged. The leaders ignored the masses' problems, and the masses did not understand the leaders' problems. It was only when the problem of work and bread posed itself urgently, at plowing time and at the end of the vacations, that the connection was reestablished between the preoccupations of the masses and those of the leadership. At the same time, the incoherence of the policy followed by the Benbellaist leadership began to be apparent to the workers as well as to the leadership itself. The true Algerian question emerged, but it found the masses unprepared and distrustful.¹

Disenchanted Independence

They expected a revolution; they got a country in collapse. In the political vacuum that was established along with independence, the FLN [Algerian National Liberation Front] leadership exploded into pieces. Joy at the end of the war and the ferment of liberation faded away: the masses were immobilized. When they intervened, it was in order to make the leaders understand that they had had enough of their disputes.

Here is the situation in the summer of 1962; the people of the cities and the countryside wanted to be led. There was no leader, because there was no leadership.

The Colonial Apparatus Vanishes

Everything that the peasants had simply called "France" for over seven years had disappeared in all its visible forms. The European farms were deserted, the screens lowered on the French shops, the owners gone, the soldiers confined to barracks, the teachers on vacation, the honky-tonks silent, and the OAS bastions abandoned. It was the great separation after one hundred and thirty years of cohabitation. The French who remained did not give orders; they

waited, and at times they collaborated. There was no more master for this enslaved people to hate.

If decolonization was such a shock, it was because the two adversaries who had held the forefront on the stage over the past few months departed in tandem. The government repatriated the draft soldiers, the officials, whether suspect or loyal, the legionnaires, and the paratroopers pell-mell. The OAS sent its colonels and its millions on fishing boats and tourist planes. Barely awakened from the racist dream, the poor European population stood in three-day lines at the ports and the airports. Paris had hastened to shield its units from the climate of the colonial war and to inspire the cadres with raisons d'être less archaic than "smash the wog" or "smash the head of state." As for the *pieds-noirs* [French colonists], their presence, at least in certain cities, had so taken the form of racketeering and villainous murder, lockout, the refusal to treat and resupply, the imprisonment of the Arabs in ghettos, that they had every reason to fear the worst when their victims became their compatriots.

There was no question of the colonial apparatus being able, as it had been elsewhere, to participate in the construction of the new regime or that the transfer of power might happen without discontinuity. The attempt at cooperation made by the most conciliatory factions of the European bourgeoisie and the nationalist leadership in the persons of Chevallier and Farès had no immediate continuation. The provisional executive was reduced to nothing in a few days: it had only owed what little power it had to the reticent cooperation of a few French officials.

In this respect, independence seemed to mean the failure of the European bourgeoisie, the only one existing in the country. Completely disqualified by its incapacity to establish a compromise with the nationalists, it now found itself constrained to leave the local administration, after having protected it from all other influence than its own for decades. It could not patronize the new power. Systematic sabotage of independence, however, left it some cards: destruction of public buildings and administrative equipment, withdrawal of technicians, and the closing of the firms ought to bring the new regime to its knees. If the regime wanted to give life to the country, then let it guarantee order and security; in other words, let the workers get back to work. The *pied-noir* bourgeoisie, defeated in its support for the OAS, was not defeated as the master of the Algerian economy. It was just that its somewhat murky political past forced it to stand aside for a short time. It went on vacation.

The National Apparatus Corrodes

One could have hoped or feared that the shell abandoned by the French

administration would the very next day be occupied unchanged by the nationalist apparatus. The power vacuum showed on the contrary that the FLN had been able to construct only the embryo of a state during the liberation struggle, and that no force organized at the national level was capable of administering it at a moment's notice. Thus the crises of colonial Algeria appeared once more: the absence of a ruling class, the political cowardice of the nationalist leaders, the pettiness of the objectives offered to the masses and accepted by them despite the unceasing growth in the intensity of their actions and their initiative over the past seven years—all the features of a country stifled in its development.

Stifled first of all by the relentless repression that the politico-administrative organization and the ALN [Algerian National Liberation Army] had suffered for years. In the military sphere, units reduced to skeletal proportions resembled guerrilla groups more than regular formations. In the regions abandoned by the French troops, the underground forces were dispersed; in the others, where, on the contrary, the concentration of opposing forces was much more significant, the battle had become too unequal.

Yet for years, with an exemplary energy, the masses had kept on producing the militants and the combatants required by the domestic resistance from within their ranks. In 196–62, the underground fighters were perhaps not much more numerous nor better equipped than those of 1955–56; but in the meantime the movement had conquered all of Algeria, and the days of December 1960 had provided the proof that the insurrectional action of a minority had turned into a mass movement. The most combative youth no longer rushed to the underground forces, which were losing their importance: they were kept busy by organizational tasks in the cities and the villages.

But the revolutionary momentum expressed in this change was not kept up. First of all, the repression came down still more heavily. Mobile commando units swept the countryside, and the police and the army went through the cities with a fine-tooth comb. There was a veritable slaughter among the émigrés in France, who provided the movement with a number of its best-trained cadres, during the course of the years 1960–61. The rhythm of the replacement of officials augmented. It is difficult to consolidate an organization if its officials disappear after a few months. The FLN apparatus also became more and more foreign to the Algerian masses.

On the other hand, the nationalist leadership had reacted to the agitation of the urban population at the end of 1960 by asking it to calm down rather than by proposing a political and social program offering intermediary objectives that would give it a practical direction. Ben Khedda's accession to the presidency of the GPRA, at the same time as it resulted from a compromise between the factions of the CNRA [National Council of the Algerian Revolution], showed that the Front relied on the moderation and diplomatic

talent of its leaders rather than on the agitation of the masses for independence. Politics regained its customary authority: guerrillas and the demonstrations only served as backup arguments for the negotiations. The fear of being overwhelmed thus became the major concern of the leadership in exile. The training personnel received orders to instill calm and discipline. When the Algerians demonstrated in 1961, it was inside an organizational cordon that kept them to heel. The only role allotted to the militants was containment, not explanation and development.

With the negotiations came the truce, the return of the dispersed and exiled peasants. The villages were devastated, the farms dilapidated, the herds decimated. The prewar problem, that of work, posed itself even more overwhelmingly before the war had ended: everything was lacking, save for mouths to feed. In the cities, the situation created by the sabotages of the right-wing French terrorists and the complicity of the armed forces was untenable: foodstuffs, medicine, and the means of work remained under the control of the OAS. Gnawed by hunger, overwhelmed by poverty, the population retreated. It let itself be convinced that nothing could be done before the departure of the French if all was not to be lost. If tendencies to go further, to reopen and to start up abandoned firms, showed themselves here and there in the cities, it was only at a minimal level; they were swiftly repressed in the name of respect for the Evian accords. As for the peasants, for the most part illiterate and without a political tradition, they tried to go back to work without waiting any longer, with or without the aid of the local ALN. On the whole, the order to respect the Europeans' property was observed.

Meanwhile, the relations between the population and the organization were transformed. The combatants and the militants no longer incarnated the protection and the hope needed by the people of the cities and the countryside in order to resist. They were no longer any help in the face of the problems of hunger and work. In the large cities especially, the workers and the young were conscious that they had seized victory from imperialism with their cries, their flags, and their disarmed mass much more than the ALN had with its guns. Moreover, the political degeneration of FLN cells and ALN sections accelerated under pressure from the influx of last-minute resistance fighters and the unemployed. In a few weeks, the incarnation of the insurrection of a people became the garbage dump of a crisis. Discipline and revolutionary idealism gave way to interfering haughtiness and privilege. At the same time as their importance diminished among the population, the local leaders were the object of contrary appeals emanating from the factions who, in search of power, gleaned a semblance of representativeness from the domestic resistance. They gained an extra authority from on high to supplement the authority from below that they had come to lack. This renewal, which they owed to circumstances at the summit, ended up separating the

officials from the civilians. Within a few days, Algeria was covered with autonomous and competing “baronies,” which were no more than the letter of the revolution abandoned by the spirit.

The base imagined itself still able to appeal to the summit about the abuses of the intermediary cadres. But when the conflict broke out at the top between Ben Khedda and the General Staff of the ALN, it became clear to all that the apparatus built to struggle against French oppression had neither doctrinal homogeneity nor organic unity and that it could not play the role the population expected of it—that of a guide in the construction of the new society. Under the decorous title of the “reconversion of the organization,” as it was called in ruling circles, the problem that awaited its solution at the end of the war was not only the form of the future state but also the social nature of independent Algeria. The fact that this problem had been left hanging during the liberation struggle largely motivated the masses’ withdrawal into a state of uncertainty, the galloping sclerosis of the local apparatuses, and finally the decomposition of the nationalist leadership itself.

Many words have been spoken here and there on the subject of the “revolution,” destined sometimes to flatter the despoiled peasants and sometimes to flatter the property owners, here capitalism and there the workers, now the Islamic tradition and now modern culture, in such a way that this revolution was stuffed with contrary hopes. But this ideological eclecticism² faithfully expressed the social inconsistency of the nationalist movement. The historical significance of such a movement generally coincides with the interests of the local bourgeoisie. In Algeria, direct colonization had blocked the economic development and political expression of this class, to the point that it had not been able either to collaborate with the French administration and bourgeoisie or to take the lead in the liberation struggle and indicate objectives for that struggle in conformity with its interests. Its attempts at conciliation rejected, it had rallied to the insurrection. In the offices of Tunis, the wise leaders of the UDMA and the centralists of the MTLD kept close to the plebeians imbued with populism who came from the peasantry or the poor petite bourgeoisie, the renegade workers of the Algerian Communist party, the *ulémas* [Muslim clerics]. Independence was the greatest common denominator among the classes and the tendencies that made up this amalgam because the peasants expropriated by the colonists and the French companies, the workers exploited by a French owner, the shopkeepers ruined by the French commercial firms, the intellectuals bullied by the French university and culture could recognize themselves in it.

The weight of colonization had compressed the class configuration of Algeria to the point of making it unrecognizable. The block in which otherwise antagonistic classes merged could not give expression to their respective interests. It was forbidden, under pain of breaking up, to take Algeria’s real

problems into consideration and to respond to them. The apparatus itself could not develop either its doctrine or its organization independently of the classes of which it was composed: the conditions for bureaucratic development did not exist. The Algerian Communist party had been too tied to the French presence in its structure as well as in its positions for it to be able to stamp the nationalist movement with the Stalinist imprint. The global policy of Khrushchevism was no more suitable for this purpose. Finally, even if it had not been able to claim the independence of the country in its own name because of its weak development, the Algerian bourgeoisie had nevertheless not been eliminated from the scene after its unhappy experience. The FLN did not confront an Algerian Chiang Kai-shek: no such person existed. It confronted imperialism directly. The result of this situation was a situation favorable to the bourgeois elements of the Front: a military victory was impossible; a compromise accord with Paris was inevitable; the moderation of politicians like Farès or Abbas was such that it might reassure the French interests in Algeria. In sum, the compromise between nationalism and imperialism could still give rise to an authentic national bourgeoisie: it would get the patriotic heritage from one side and capital from the other. For evident political reasons, the operation could not be carried out either overtly or in the short term. It was advisable to delay the moment for irreversible decisions concerning the nature of society after independence. Meanwhile, opportunism took root.³

Thus, for some years, no program more precise than that of Soummam was developed, and the Evian compromise was discussed without any principle in mind other than national unity and territorial integrity. Paris obtained complete satisfaction on the only point that was essential to it: the fate of the capital invested in Algeria.

The Masses Wait

Independence did not signal new activity from the masses. Having sacrificed their last sheep to the green and white flag, they simply waited. But, in the course of the crisis, their refusal to intervene changed its meaning. The leaders who returned from exile were at first acclaimed on all sides with the same fervor, without distinction between tendencies. When they came to blows over them, entire families of villagers even sat down between the “lines,” opposing their peaceful presence to the war of the cliques. The will for unity resisted the ruptures at the top. Tired of violence, the population refused to engage itself in a struggle whose meaning it did not understand. This naïveté tinged with greatness was imposing. Those on high started to fear lest the base cease to trust them. But as the crisis continued with the prospect of restarting the economy becoming distant, with unemployment, insecurity,

and hunger becoming worse, this patience became impatient. In many regions the cadres achieved the tour de force of making their domination as hated as that of the forces of repression. When it became the instrument with which the latecomers to the ANP gave themselves apartments, cars, and other privileges, the submachine gun of the *djoundi* [holy warriors] was discredited. People wanted peace, bread, and work. They saw no relation between the conflicts that set the leaders against one another and these simple objectives; they saw very well, on the other hand, the relation of these struggles to careerism and favoritism.

Good sentiments and bad were both pandered to by all the cliques in an attempt to build support for themselves. Each of the groups placed its creatures in the administrative positions abandoned by the French, without concern for competence. Confusion gummed up the works of what remained of the state. Opportunists wormed their way into the commandos. The accusations of complicity with imperialism, of counterrevolution, of personal ambition, flew in every sense above the heads of the Algerians, who were unable to deal with them. These acts of verbal (and at times physical) violence lacked any political basis, and shock soon gave way to exasperation: "If they are what they say, then let them all go!" In Algiers, the most politically conscious minority ended up demonstrating, in the face of opposition from the authorities, with cries of "We're fed up [*baraket*]." The enthusiasm of the liberation cooled. Formal meetings replaced the packed and boisterous gatherings of the early days, with head counts in order to determine whether one was more popular than one's opponents. The population became a clientele, politics a stage production. When the band finally came to an agreement on the way to consult the public, the public—whom they mocked by giving them banners carrying the inscription "Long live the people!"—was too busy trying to survive to be conscious of the honor done to it by such consultation. It chose the representatives that were chosen for it. Abbas, in proclaiming the democratic and popular republic, shed a tear for a long-frustrated ambition. There were 2 million unemployed.

It was "with the masses totally indifferent, preoccupied by matters of another order"⁴ that the question of power was settled. This is the essential fact that dominates all the events that have occurred in Algeria since independence. Lethargy takes the place of the fervor that had stirred all ranks of the population over the last years of the liberation struggle. Autonomous actions were limited: a few occupations of vacant properties, a few demonstrations whose spontaneity cannot easily be distinguished from the interests of the cliques. Moreover, these demonstrations were always of a limited character: a refusal to intervene in the conflicts at the top, protests against unemployment, against the lack of purges, against the abandonment of the old resistance fighters and of the victims of the repression.

Motifs such as the exhaustion consequent upon years of war and oppression, the shattering of the nationalist organization, and economic collapse seem to make the withdrawal of the masses understandable. They remain, however, circumstantial; some of them, particularly the disintegration of the organizations of struggle, ought to be considered as the signs rather than the preconditions of this withdrawal.

The composite character of what has been called the masses is a less momentary element. There are peasants, workers, the middle class, each group traversed by the conflict between generations, by a more or less strong adherence to the traditional culture, by the nature of needs, by language. The overwhelming majority of the Algerian people is peasant, but what is this peasantry?

Is it the seasonal or occasional landless peasant, or the average fellah (property owner)? The agricultural worker or the farmer? What community of interests unites the small farmer of the coastal plains and the wage earner of the large domains of the Sétifois? What common experience of exploitation can the day laborer grape pickers and the small Kabyle farmer engaged in mixed cultivation share? Geography, past history, and colonization pulverized Algerian rural society into sectors among which everything differs, from cultural practices to institutions and even language. Then class antagonisms are embroidered onto the particolored costume that makes up the *bled* (hinterland), class antagonisms that are more or less distinct according to the degree of capitalist penetration into the countryside (it is dominant in the colonized flatlands), or according to the persistence of an Algerian feudal class (as in the high plains of the Constantinois or the Oranais), or according to the degree of survival of tribal or village communities (in Kabylie, in the Aurès).⁵

Contrary to what happened in many of the countries of black Africa, colonization did not always leave the traditional communities intact, communities whose structures and institutions are far from homogeneous across the whole of Algerian territory. But, on the other hand, agrarian capitalism did not, as in Cuba, subject all rural workers to uniform exploitation so as to create an agricultural proletariat lent unity and a determining social weight by its living and working conditions.

The liberation struggle had countered the dispersal of the peasants, of the whole of society. Nationalist sentiment, nourished by humiliation and anger, had driven all Algerians to construct, for themselves as well as for others, for each aspect of their everyday lives, a model of society, a model of the Algerian to set against the colonialist model. The repression failed because the consciousness of the people contained an alternative to the repression: independence. Fervor, participation in the struggle, demonstrations, and unfailing pressure directed against French oppression

by all social strata were all signs that this self-image could no longer be stolen from the spirit and the life of the masses. This was their unity. Whatever creativity, individual courage, and usable institutions could be found in traditional communities and in colonial society itself were put to the service of this image. The insurrection, which could not win any military victory, had gained this far more decisive success in allowing all individuals to live with themselves, whether as young or as old, as man or as woman, as peasant or as worker, as Kabyle or as Arab. All of Algeria flooded out through the breach that the armed struggle had opened in the wall of the ghetto in which colonization had enclosed it. To the image of the "wog" the insurrection opposed that of the *djoundi*, which the population echoed, fulfilled, enriched, endlessly transformed. The struggle acted as therapy; it delivered Algeria from the image of itself that the French had introduced into its life. There were many signs that the Algerians sought to destroy not so much the French as the "wogs" into which they themselves had been transformed by the French. The pursuit of independence consisted in delivering oneself from the colonial nightmare. It could not be more intense than during the struggle, when the masses broke and trampled their own caricature underfoot.

When the other independence, political independence, was obtained, it dissolved the social glue that held all these fragments together. What held all these lives together was lost like a wadi in the sand. There were no longer any "wogs" to kill; there were Algerians who had to be given life. Each social category retakes its place in society, each individual attempts to return to his or her niche. The problem of helping Algerians to live is conceived and solved in terms of an individual or a small collectivity, a village, a family, a quarter. No consciousness can span the whole of society so as to pose the question of what that society is for itself. The unemployed person wants work; the woman wants bread for her son; the combatant wants to be honored for having fought; the student wants books and professors; the worker wants a salary; the peasant wants seeds; the shopkeeper wants to restart business. No one, no political group, no social class is able to build and propagate a new image of Algeria that Algeria might desire as it had desired independence. It was certainly useless to expect the peasants to take the initiative in such a new development. We will return to this later. The bourgeoisie for its part did not have the economic, social, political, and ideological consistency required to grasp the social problem as a whole and impose its solutions with the assent or the acceptance of large sections of the population. The proletariat, even if it is relatively important in this underdeveloped country, did not manage to become conscious of exploitation as the fundamental fact of its and the whole

society's existence, nor could it distinguish its own gains from those of the other classes.

The inability of the workers to build an autonomous political organization and ideology is the other side of the agitation that marked the years of the war. It is the sign that the problem posed in colonial Algeria was not that of socialism defined as a movement toward the classless society. If all the social strata, all the economic categories, all the communities of language and culture could be mixed together in the crucible of the liberation struggle, it was precisely because the choice was not between being proletarian or free but between being "wog" or Algerian. The Algerian worker participated in the war, he made the contribution that he owed as part of Algeria in revolt, he never felt that his class held the answer to all the problems of society after independence. And doubtless he was not wrong: the problem of development in the world of 1962 is not the problem of socialism. The absence or the fragility of proletarian consciousness can properly be blamed on the terrorism directed since 1956 against the MNA [Algerian National Movement] and the USTA [Algerian workers' trade union] by the Frontist leadership, which broke up the community of émigré workers, or even on the French Communist party's break with the Messalist organization dating back to 1936. All these facts illustrate rather than explain the political and ideological weakness of the Algerian proletariat. The truth is that the Algerians could solve the problem they set themselves: that of being Algerians. But the workers could not set themselves the problem they were unable to solve: that of putting an end to exploitation.

The masses left the stage at the moment when "politics" entered it. A group of men, borrowing some of the recent energy of the passion for independence, attempted to provide for the Algerians (intended for them, but in their place) some goals and some means around which they might unite once more. But when the masses are missing from the construction of a society, the result of this difficult process of construction is only the simulacrum of a state.

Building the State⁶

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The State and the Bourgeoisie

The political and state apparatus thus began to crystallize toward the end of summer 1962. What is its significance? Ben Bella's state is suspended in the void; it seeks its social basis. It cannot find it in either a bourgeoisie endowed with political traditions and economic, technical, and social competence or

in a bureaucracy capable of compensating for its own incompetence as a ruling class by ideological cohesion, party discipline, and enthusiasm. It is for this reason that the reconstruction of society began backwards, by the construction of the state from the top down. The task this state encounters at present is that of creating its “cadres,” that is, the ruling class on which it will lean and of which it will be the expression.

As I have said, the politicomilitary bureaucracy that led the war of liberation scattered on the day after independence. The only bourgeoisie in the strict and decisive sense (a bourgeoisie that possesses the means of production) was the European bourgeoisie, which was politically eliminated along with the most right-wing elements of the nationalist movement. The political offensive launched by Chevallier and Farès since 1962 has failed: it clashed head-on with nationalist feeling. The fraction of the GPRA that had signed the Evian accords could go along with a second and more cunning attempt at reintegrating the *pied-noir* bourgeoisie into the Algerian nation. But this time the offensive did not have time to develop, despite its simplicity, because of the disarray of the French colonists and their suspicions concerning the future of Benkheddism. The Benbellists counterattacked and overcame it. Does this spell the end for the bourgeoisie?

The European bourgeoisie had begun to withdraw from Algeria before July 1, and even before the signing of the Evian accords. During the summer, the withdrawal has become more pronounced. This means its disappearance as a political force. But the goods it possesses are not purely and simply abandoned. During the last years of the war, Algerian farmers and managers, profiting from the absence of the property owners and from the absence of control, pocketed the land revenues; lands, buildings, and small firms were repurchased by the weak Algerian middle class. Speculation allowed it to enlarge its nest egg pretty quickly. The volume of the transactions sky-rocketed when the final negotiations began and when it became evident that Paris had decided to recognize independence. From March onward, the *pieds-noirs'* panic gave the richest peasants and shopkeepers the occasion to strike an advantageous bargain on full ownership, management, or renting of European enterprises and firms. They speculated on anything; the economic crisis paralleled the political crisis to favor speculation. When, in the autumn, the lands will need to be plowed, it will be clear that the transfer of the agricultural enterprises to Algerians has some significance; the same for housing. While the fight for political power goes on, the Algerian bureaucracy fattens itself.

The administrators installed by the provisional executive protected this operation at the same time as they played their part in it. The prefects, the subprefects, the cabinet leaders, the inspectors, the members of the special delegations, originating from either the French administration or the FLN apparatus, were paid for their complicity. The disappearance of all central

control, along with the inactivity of the masses, made the matter easy. The corruption of the civil servants went along with this enrichment of notables and businessmen. They sabotaged the purges and favored the invasion of the administrations by their cronies. The new bourgeoisie proliferated in the bosom of the state.

It had no real social force, no ideology, no political perspective; it was nothing more than the association of the bandits and tight-fisted employers of nascent Algeria. But it could find an ally on the side of its natural protector, French capitalism. The decree issued by the provisional executive on August 24, 1962, ordered the requisitioning of abandoned firms by the prefects, the nomination by the same authority of administrator-managers "chosen from among the specialists" who were to take the place and the functions of the absent owners, and lastly the restitution of the firms and profits to the property owners as soon as they demonstrated a desire to recommence their activity. Measures with a double entry: the Europeans kept all their rights, which French capitalism could only view with benevolence; meanwhile, revenue fell into the hands of the prefects and the Algerian "specialists," that is, into the hands of the new bourgeoisie. This was the hope of an economic collaboration between the nouveaux riches and imperialism. Thus imperialism found a new bridgehead in the country among the speculators in the administration. Venality, when it is introduced into the very instruments of power, is not a mediocre ally when it needs only to be bought off.

When Ben Bella settled in Algiers, the embryonic state of which he assumed the leadership was the parasites' point of crystallization: it was the classic situation of newly independent countries. There was no choice: he had to either govern with this corrupt apparatus or give up. Compromises were inevitable with the members of the middle and the petite bourgeoisie who had been enriched in the space of a few months by the exodus of the Europeans and who had patrons installed in the administration. The most urgent question, that of the lands and the property left by the *pied-noir* bourgeoisie and taken over by the nouveaux riches, would remain pending for some time. Would the buyers manage to legitimate the transactions of the spring and summer, or would the government turn against them? Through this question, which dominated the end of the summer (August–September 1962), the social content of the new state was placed at issue.

The bourgeoisie could in any case find a means of allaying some of its fears in the Tripoli program, under which the land, but not the means of production, ought to belong to those who work it.⁷ This sufficiently eliminates the prospect of any collectivization of industrial firms and does not exclude mid-sized rural property, which tends to be directly farmed by

the owner. The program's silence with regard to workers' problems and the cautious nature of its references to the proletariat were equally reassuring. Ben Bella has made no declarations to counter this silence and caution. The president of the Democratic and Popular Republic even refused to appease the journalist from *Unità*—who objected that only the industrial proletariat could make up the revolutionary avant-garde—with the few stock phrases that would have satisfied her. He replied that, after all, “in the highly industrialized countries powerful masses of workers have not been able to impose revolutionary change.”⁸ The activity of the Political Bureau toward the workers is no less eloquent than its silences: the bureau brutally dismisses the UGTA's offers, it publicly discredits the *Fédération de France*, made up mainly of proletarians, it discourages—without daring to block them directly—the attempts made by certain local leaders of the agricultural workers' union to organize the management of the abandoned enterprises,⁹ it refuses credit to the workers' committee that had taken over a metallurgical enterprise in Algiers.¹⁰ On the contrary, the authorities keep on begging property owners to reopen the firms and the farms, they delay instrumentation of the decree issued by the executive at its request, fixing October 8 as the time after which requisition of these properties can be announced. In Arzew, Ben Bella charms the representatives of the financial groups and industrial firms come from France, Great Britain, and the United States: “Nothing can be built on hatred,” he bluntly tells them. “The condition for our development is the reestablishment of security. I insist on it. Let us turn the page and help one another. In two or three weeks, Algeria will be an oasis of peace.”¹¹

All this in no way hinders the same Ben Bella from responding quite clearly to *L'Unità* that “the political prospects for Algeria” are “socialism.” It is true that he immediately corrects himself: “an Algerian socialism.” This new variety of socialism has the original features of considering the working class as incapable of radically transforming society, of excluding workers' demands from its program, and of seeking its social base among the petite bourgeoisie and the peasantry.

The artisans and the small shopkeepers certainly owe the attention devoted to them in the Tripoli program to the fact that they represent a force of social stabilization, and to their money rather than to the blows that time and again smashed the shutters of their boutiques. If the trade ministry has been entrusted to a Mozabite, Mohammed Khobzi, this is because the community to which he belongs, which controls most domestic retail transactions, had sheltered its capital in Germany. The new state desperately needed that capital to relieve the payment difficulties that were paralyzing trade and driving the administration to the brink of disaster.

The State and the Peasants

Meanwhile, the base that the new power claims for itself is elsewhere: “The peasant population is the decisive force on which we rely.... The poor peasants are without any doubt the base element of the revolutionary transformation. The revolutionary mass is fundamentally peasant.”¹² And in order to found the theory of the revolution in the countryside, Ben Bella will seek celebrated antecedents: “The Cuban revolution took shape on foundations of this kind: an armed peasant mass seeking independence and agrarian reform”—or unexpected ones: “Czarist Russia was also an agricultural country.”¹³

The importance of the peasants in the liberation struggle was immense. Not only are they the large mass of the Algerian people, but their problems incarnated and incarnate the whole social problem of this country: the need for land, bread, work, a new culture. In other “dependent countries,” in Africa, in the Near East, capitalism’s domination came to terms with precapitalist structures rather than destroying them; the local feudal lords cooperated with the European companies; investment remained tightly restricted to the needs of the capitalist firms and to the speculative operations of the landed aristocracy; in the interior, the peasants continued, though more oppressed than in the past, to till the soil with their age-old tools. Traditional culture was not shattered from top to bottom; it did not have to revolt in order to rediscover or discover a new social basis, an acceptable image of itself, or meaningful social relations. The rural world was not caught up in revolutionary ferment because capitalism had not initiated any new practices there.

In Algeria, direct colonization took 3 million hectares of farms and forests from the peasants in the space of a hundred years. A modern, mechanized capitalist sector and a low level of employment left most of the expropriated farm laborers without work. Demographic explosion increased unemployment. The destruction of the artisan class and of small village commerce, along with the fact that the peasants were obliged to buy their few indispensable commodities at monopoly prices, ruined the subsistence economy. The insignificance of industrial development and technical training, along with European settlement, prevented the rural unemployed from finding employment in the nonagricultural sector. At the same time as imperialism stripped the peasants of their ancient means of living, it refused them any new ones. The European invasion combined the models of the conquest of the American continent from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries and of the imperialism of the 1880s in its form and its consequences. The worker is chased from the land but is forbidden to become a wage earner.

In the long term, the peasants are constrained to either revolt or succumb. This is not an economic choice; it would be superficial to account for the 1954 revolt as the effect of a bad harvest. The war that began at that time was not a *jacquerie*. Little by little, the peasants increased not only the numbers of the underground forces, but also their meaning. The fighting was a reconquest of their native land. The *djebel* becomes the homeland once more. The earth and the people conspire. In wanting to be Algerian, the peasants retake possession of the country, of themselves. This reconquest occurs on the scale of the despoliation that had occurred: the traditional institutions, the community of family, village, and language are all poured into the crucible of the struggle, they are an instrument or a dimension of it, but nothing more, because they cannot on their own provide an adequate riposte to a French aggression that had created the hollow negative of a nation. It is not a matter of restoring civilization in its precapitalist state, but of installing material and social relations acceptable to everyone. These are symbolized in general by the theme of an independent Algeria.¹⁴

This has not meant, however, that the political content of the peasant movement has become any more distinct. Not only has the question of society, of its organization, of the state not been explicitly asked, but the preliminary and essential question of the relation between the masses and the organization remains unasked. Indeed, even the question of the real significance of the reconquest of the country by the peasants and the question of the appropriation of the lands by the rural masses have failed to emerge as a problem for these masses to resolve. Herein lies the great paradox of the Algerian revolution: a profoundly disintegrated rural society rises up in the face of its own crisis and yet does not produce the ideas or the actions that might overcome it. When the Congolese peasants returned to their tribal communities once the Belgians had been chased out, that had a meaning because those communities had preserved what belonged to them. When fellahs without land, without work, with their lives and their reasons for living shattered by an age-old expropriation, simply come to a halt when their expropriators leave and expect the solution to their problem to come from a nonexistent power, this is at first glance inexplicable. The entire world, starting with the Algerians themselves, has managed to remain stupefied by it.

To understand this hiatus, one can turn to the diversity of regional situations and the limits they impose on social consciousness. Neither the minds nor the actions of the poor peasants who work the slopes of the Kabyle or Chaouia country contain the prospect of a profound agrarian transformation. Attached by tradition to family smallholdings, concerned to defend their granaries, they have little to gain from land redistribution when there is no new land left to be conquered on the mountain. Of course, the cultivation of olive and fig trees can be improved, the soil can be improved by em-bankments and

plantations, animal husbandry can be rationalized; but what could popular cooperatives do without the help of agronomists and rural inspectors? The archaic peasants cannot find the ends and means of a profitable agriculture within themselves. At any rate, the solution of the peasant crisis in these regions consists in the installation of processing industries (textile, foodstuffs) that can use the local hydroelectric equipment and that offer a high level of employment relative to the capital invested. But, here again, the peasants' fate is not in their own hands.

If one turns to the population of laborers, the *khammès* and the sharecroppers who cultivate the arable lands, the agrarian revolution seems capable of taking a completely different direction. Limitations on the size of landholdings and the constitution of production and sales cooperatives with the necessary tools, along with the introduction of new crops to alternate with cereals, allow the hope of a greatly improved yield per hectare and of increased employment. But the obstacle encountered by the peasantry on this route is its own attitude to the land and to work. For example, the fact that the *khamezzat* could survive while giving the peasant only a fifth of the yield was due to the practical obligation by which the property owner is held responsible for the subsistence of the worker and his family in bad years as in good ones. In a rural economy continually threatened by scarcity, where monetary circulation is extremely weak, the debt-ridden peasant may well prefer payment in kind, miserable but assured, to a salary that is problematic and difficult to exchange.¹⁵ Traditional values weigh in the same direction: the capacity to dominate nature and the attractions of economic growth have no place there. Social relations are not the product of a logic of interest, which is born only with mercantilism, but of an ethics governed by traditional rights and duties.

Institutions and geographic and historical conditions are the obstacles to a peasant movement that might seek to do anything more than claim independence, that might seek to realize independence by practically reorganizing the relationship of the fellah to the land. All that is certainly true, but it was already true during the liberation struggle. Why can the motifs of disunity and defeat still be invoked now, even though the guerrilla war has overcome them? Why did the peasant unity that arose during the struggle for independence not continue in the struggle for land and for the new society? It is true that the peasantry is not a revolutionary class in the sense that the conditions of its work and its life do not provide it with the fundamental experiences of exploitation and alienation in the raw, unencumbered by traditional forms of ownership, of individualism, of the village community, or religion, and do not constrain it to provide a total response to the total conflict that the proletariat experiences. But in the case of Algeria, this is not even the case: one cannot say that the peasant movement

did not encounter the question of society; quite simply, the movement did not ask that question, and it failed to provide an alternative, even hesitantly, to what existed—at least once independence had been won.

If the unity of the peasants did not survive the struggle, even in the form of a bureaucracy, it is because they did not win their victory on the ground. Power could not take on a concrete form in the eyes of the peasants as the incarnation of a new society on the move, as a force endowed with a physical existence, constituting itself, consolidating itself, spreading along with the guerrilla who repulses the adversary, comes down from the mountains, approaches the cities. No anticapital, no capital of anticolonial Algeria, arose among the rural masses, drawing on them and expressing their aspirations, posing and resolving all the problem arising out of the insurrection as its authority spread to the very borders of the country. The political unity of the movement remained foreign to the social diversity of the country. The rural population was not able to crystallize its needs, to enact its transformation and its positive revolution, around a state on the move within it.

The idea of a peasant army, of a power remaining in touch with the countryside because of the needs of the war and those of the revolution, helping the masses to carry out the revolution by attending to the war, did indeed exist in the ALN. Fanon had tried to theorize it¹⁶ in a confused way, without giving it its true dimensions, which are strategic as well as political. Traces of this theorization can be found in the Tripoli program. But the idea had only a nostalgic existence because the ALN was not this state on the move, but was made up of either hunted guerrillas inside the country or battalions immobilized in exile. The peasants never saw the new power take shape, they did not see the land change hands, they were not invited to form cooperatives to take over the management of enterprises, of water, of seed, under the protection of the fighters. For them, no start was made on the reconstruction of the villages, the repair of roads and bridges, the reestablishment of communications, the rebuilding of the schools under the guidance of revolutionary officials. They could not seize hold of their country. It remained the stake in a struggle between adversaries, the object of a redoubled destruction, an undecided affair, offering its paths, its shelters, its peaks, and its nights now to the one and now to the other.

Thus a concrete alternative to the power of the French was required for the peasants to be able to go further than national resistance. In the last years of the war, this alternative had even less consistency than in 1956–57. The territorial battle had been won by the troops of repression since 1958. The population displacement, which affected almost 2 million peasants, made it quite clear to them that there was no Algerian power capable of standing up to French troops on the spot, even if the concentration camps provided a veritable breeding ground for nationalist propaganda. The General Staff was

abroad. The revolutionary war was lost. The fact that from the end of 1960 the national movement won over the cities and erupted there in mass demonstrations certainly took on an immense political importance. New social strata in their turn recognized the free Algerian as the only acceptable image of their future. The youth of the cities entered into the revolution. But, at the same time, the revolution abandoned the *bled*, and only the war remained there. It is true that in any case the fate of the countryside is not decided in the countryside, that even if they wanted to, the Algerian peasants could not create textile workshops or food processing factories, invent agronomists, produce the agricultural implements and seeds out of their heads (all those things without which there can be no agrarian revolution). Lastly, the extension of the movement to the urban classes, because it meant that the workers and the young in their turn posed the problems of society collectively, marked an indispensable stage in the consolidation of the revolution and allowed an effective response to the rural crisis to be envisaged. But this urban movement that spread the content of the struggle to all of the institutions of colonial society hid¹⁷ the defeat of the peasant movement insofar as it was an attempt to establish a force among the rural masses. The city had no echo in the countryside; it took over from the countryside once it had been bled dry. The transformation of the armed struggle into a political struggle was paradoxically both a strategic victory and a political defeat: militarily, the situation that confronted the French General Staff in the cities at the end of 1960 was worse than the one that reigned on the eve of the battle of Algiers, and it had to start all over again; politically, from the viewpoint of the FLN leadership, the splitting of society between cities and countryside was not repaired. The peasantry became Algeria's burden once more, the principal theme of its crisis. The repression had borne too heavily on them for them to become an active component.

When Ben Bella took power, the "revolution by the peasantry" could no longer be the revolution of the peasantry. Its invocation could mean nothing more than that a state constructed far away from the peasants—far from the whole population—was going to busy itself with reform. Ben Bella's policy preserved only the most jarring themes of what authentic expression of peasant struggle and aspirations Fanon had been able to achieve in his descriptions. On the pretext that "Europe is springing leaks everywhere,"¹⁸ an expurgated version of Islamic culture should be rebuilt. On the pretext that the proletariat of the developed countries did not make the revolution, Ben Bella intends to unleash the communist capacities of the primitive peasantry and to center revolutionary strategy on a Third World International. On the pretext that the workers of the underdeveloped countries are privileged (that is to say, made middle class) in relation to the peasants, he seeks to keep their organizations on a leash. When returned to the context of the Algerian political

situation at the end of the summer 1962, these half-truths—it is true that Western “culture” is no longer a culture, that the revolutionary workers’ movement is nonexistent in the developed countries, that alongside the pitiful income of the Algerian peasant the salary of the public transport worker of Algiers or the metalworker of Sochaux is the product of another world and can appear as a privilege—these half-truths serve all the more as an ideological cover for the powerlessness of the government, and possibly even as a cover for the bourgeois offensive that is taking shape in the shelter of the governmental apparatus.

Although Ben Bella may try to present himself as a peasant leader, the relation of his government to the rural masses is formal, plebiscitary. This state cannot express the peasant aspirations that have been killed off. Rather, it tries to dictate them. The question of the political content and the social basis of the new power was not answered in early autumn. On the other hand, the question of the social composition of the administrations was resolved little by little. There, the nouveaux riches abound. Simultaneously, the offensive by monopolists with regard to farms and buildings (the ancient passions of underdeveloped countries) continues. In these conditions, the realization of the agrarian objectives defined by the Tripoli program becomes difficult: how could an apparatus supported by the enriched peasants and the new bourgeoisie enforce the reallocation of land to cooperatives or state farms? Even a moderate program, like the project of giving the peasant collectives the farms left vacant by the Europeans, becomes unrealizable if these farms have been monopolized by Algerians under the protection of the local authorities. In a few months, the crisis that disrupted an entire society has been reduced to the dimensions of the problem of abandoned properties. The masses’ loss of energy occurs in direct proportion to this process. Furthermore, this last problem is linked to that of French aid.

French aid constitutes a test that ought to allow the new government to sort out its orientation and to reveal its social significance. The use that will be made of French aid may in effect reveal the intention and the capacity of the Algerian government to put an end to the process that is disrupting society and that is at the origin of the crisis. Whatever it is at its birth, Ben Bella’s state can still find its *raison d’être* if it manages to impose on society and on itself the measures necessary to overcome unemployment.

Unemployment, considered as the most obvious and the most tragic expression of the crisis, is not just one fact among others but the result of the domination of French capitalism in the country.

A Process of Dislocation

French colonization involved the whole of Algerian society in a contradictory

process. On the one hand, the appropriation of the farms and their exploitation for profit created an agrarian capitalist sector in the middle of the traditional economy. At the same time, a labor force newly "liberated" from earlier relations of production found itself free to become wage earners; the capital invested in agriculture reaped a surplus value sufficient to allow a normal rate of accumulation. Thus the conditions for the passage of the Algerian economy and society to the stage of capitalist relations of production were fulfilled. But the subordination of the capitalist sector to the French metropolitan system prevented it from pursuing its development toward a complete liquidation of previously existing relations and the consolidation of an Algerian capitalism. In return, the embryonic, almost exclusively agrarian, character of Algerian capitalism forced it to function as a simple economic appendix to French imperialism.

In Western countries, the organic complement to the introduction of capitalist relations in the countryside (the appropriation of the land by the landlords and the proletarization of the peasants) was the development of manufacturing industry. The farmers, sharecroppers, and tenant farmers, chased from the fields, rushed toward the cities, where accumulated capital could, in buying their labor force, provide them with employment. Of course, there is no question of painting a glowing portrait of the development of capitalism in this country: it presupposed, on the contrary, not only that the peasants were reduced to famine, but also that the new industrial proletarians were subjected without defense to the working conditions and the salary that the employers dictated to them. Meanwhile, the process as a whole implied the destruction of precapitalist relations and of the construction of new relations: capital seized hold of the entire society.

Algeria presents a social structure that bears witness to the fact that the introduction of capitalist relations into the country followed the same pattern as in the West in its major outlines: expulsion of the rural workers, constitution of large landholdings, "liberation" of a considerable mass of the labor force. This ought to have been followed by a passage to wage earning as the dominant form of the relations of production. In fact, the figures show more than half a million agricultural workers, plus 400,000 migrant workers in France and 200,000 to 250,000 Algerian wage earners in industry, trade, and public services in Algeria. In total, more than a million workers, totally dispossessed of the means of production, that is to say, either proletarianized or proletarianizable. For a colonial country, this is a significant proportion of the active population.

Meanwhile, evolution toward a fully capitalist social structure did not occur. Algerian capitalists send almost half of their profits out of the country and speculate with or unproductively consume the other half, so that three-fifths of the total investment is financed by the French state. In 1953, it was

estimated that 40 percent of private savings left Algeria annually;¹⁹ only half were reinvested on the spot. The state financed 60 percent of the 121 billion francs invested in that year. Public financing created few jobs because it was directed to the infrastructure: of 48 billion in net investment in 1953, 22 billion were devoted to hydraulics, to protection against and repair of soil erosion, to Algerian Electricity and Gas, to the Algerian railroads, to the postal and telecommunications services and the road system. Social and administrative investment (26 billion in the same year), even if it creates employment, in no way augments productive capacity. Private economic investment is essentially directed toward trade and construction. The rare attempts made to create local manufacturing and processing industries met with open hostility from French interests.

On the other hand, the presence of European settlers resulted in closing down any possibilities of employment offered to unemployed Algerians. The concentration of landholdings chased the lesser colonists toward the cities. Its Western mentality, its European culture, and its superior qualifications made this work force preferable to the illiterate peasants. In the building trade, on the docks, in the mines, the Algerians obtained only the most undesirable jobs. Even today, Algerian nonagricultural wage earners form only 22 percent of the active Algerian population.

Finally, even when it takes place, proletarianization is never complete in a colonial country. Many workers classed as “agricultural workers” are only temporary wage earners who get taken on for the day or for the season during periods of high agricultural activity. As for the “real” wage earners, estimated at 170,000 permanent workers, they are subject to the rule of the “colonial wage” according to which monetary income is in principle only a “complement” to the resources of the peasant family; they are entitled neither to family benefits nor to social security, for example. This overlapping of the wage-earning sector and the traditional sector, through the intermediary of the family or the village, prevents any clear identification of the proportion of the active population that is integrated into the circulation of capital. This situation is brutally apparent in the case of migrant workers in France whose salaries support entire villages in Kabylie.

Capitalist “Aid”

Under the pretext of helping independent Algeria to develop, the Evian accords exacted a double obligation: to respect the interests of capitalism as it was present in the country before July 1, 1962,²⁰ and to observe the rhythm of growth planned for by the French experts in the last years of colonization.²¹ The two constraints are cleverly combined. The capital invested, notably in agriculture, serves as collateral for the capital to be invested: if you seize the

lands from French ownership, you will compensate them out of the sum of our aid.²² In return, the growth rate predicted by the development plan,²³ whose renewal the accords stipulate, assumes as a hypothesis a practically unchanged agrarian situation:²⁴ land ownership being what it is, here is what we can do to create employment. Imperialism agrees to aid the country, but on the basis of its colonial structure: such is the sense of the accords.

It is evidently a non-sense. The first question posed in Algeria is that of work. The only answer would be the massive transfer of half of the unemployed of the active rural population into the secondary and tertiary sectors. These have therefore to absorb not only urban unemployment, but also agricultural underemployment. Now the Ten Year Plan predicts that the number of days worked in the countryside will rise from 150 million at the beginning of the period (1959) to 177 million at the end (1968) for an unchanged active rural population of 2,693,000 persons. Assuming that 265 working days per year constitute full employment, this plan provides for full-time employment for only 668,000 persons at the end of the period. More than 2 million agricultural workers would thus remain unemployed.²⁵ The Constantine Plan ends up with the same result.²⁶ The creation of jobs in nonagricultural sectors is conceived in such a way that the question of peasant unemployment will remain pending.

Keeping to the secondary and tertiary sectors, the main subjects of the plans for investment, the same attitude appears yet again. The lack of a qualified work force is one of the sources of the bottleneck familiar to the specialists of underdevelopment. In 1955–56, the technical education and professional training of adults produced 6,700 to 6,800 qualified workers, from the OS [Special Organization] to technicians. According to the model employed by the Ten Year Plan, 20,000 would have been needed in 1959 for there to have been 55,000 by 1970,²⁷ the figure required by the development of the nonagricultural sectors. The Ten Year Plan, however, makes no provision for the financing of this technical program: implicitly, qualified labor remains the monopoly of the European immigrants.

Thus there is to be a lack of employment in the countryside and a lack of qualifications in the city. This situation expresses the dislocation of Algerian society in the realm of employment: rural overpopulation resulting from the theft of the lands, urban underemployment resulting from European settlement. In envisaging no modification in this state of things, the Evian accords perpetuate the evil from which the country suffers. As for investments, examination of their source and their breakdown fully verifies this assessment.

To assure an average annual growth of 5 percent in average revenue over a ten-year period, taking into account a demographic increase of 2.5 percent per year, around 5,000 billion francs must be invested over the period,²⁸ of which 4,000 billion should be in new construction. The Ten

Year Plan predicts that around half of the financing will be supplied by Algerian funds, the other half by funds "of external origin." Almost the whole of the Algerian capital would come from private savings; the foreign funds would be in large part public and semipublic. Of the total, 16 percent will go to the primary sector, 51 percent to the secondary, 19 percent to the tertiary, 14 percent to housing. The essentially foreign public-sector funds would primarily finance the investments in agriculture, infrastructure, and housing, the private funds of foreign origin being entirely devoted to the petroleum sector. As for private Algerian capital, it will be divided above all among three main sectors: agriculture, housing, and trade. Investment in various manufacturing and processing industries does not make up 7 percent of the total of planned investments.²⁹ At the end of the period, the current account balance should be in deficit by 164 billion francs, which results from the increase of imports consequent upon the development of production. This deficit is to be almost entirely covered by loans to the Algerian treasury from the French treasury (150 billion francs). The movement of private capital should for its part have a profitable balance of only 10 billion francs.

The first article of the "*Déclaration de principes relative à la coopération économique et financière*" repeats the main themes of this set of investments. This means that (1) private savings of Algerian origin continue to be directed into traditionally favored sectors, as is the case in all underdeveloped countries: investment in lands, housing, and commerce does not contribute at all to the overthrow of the colonial structure; (2) foreign private capital is devoted to the exploitation of Saharan mineral resources and provides only small profits for the country;³⁰ and (3) industrialization is essentially the responsibility of the French state; as before, it consists in the provision of infrastructure and housing rather than actual industrial installations. Essentially, capitalist investment therefore follows the same lines as in the past. The only modifications consist, on the one hand, in a quantitative increase in aid and, on the other hand, in an expansion in private savings of local origin, that is, the prospect of the constitution of an Algerian bourgeoisie, whose investments are, however, envisaged as purely speculative. It should be added that by Article 3 of the *Déclaration économique*, imperialism reserves the right to keep an eye on the "full effectiveness of the aid and its allocation to the objects for which it was granted."

It will hardly be surprising if in these conditions the question of employment will no more be resolved in the city than in the countryside. The Ten Year Plan provides for more than a doubling of nonagricultural full-time employment. Meanwhile, taking demographic growth into account, there will remain 140,000 underemployed at the end of the period

(versus 200,000 figured at the beginning) and this despite the fact that the emigration of the active population ought to more than double during this period.

The figures we quoted are only interesting to the extent that they reveal, if such a revelation is necessary, the attitude taken by imperialism in the face of the problem of Algeria's development. Certain paragraphs of the Evian accords tried to preserve some room to maneuver for the Algerian government, to allow compromises on certain aspects of financial aid, to look toward subsequent discussions over agreements on the handing over of some responsibilities. The direction taken by this "cooperation" will at best remain what is laid down in the very watermark of the Ten Year Plan: a late contribution by imperialism to the smooth formation of an Algerian bourgeoisie. Furthermore, it must be added that since 1958 the situation has grown still worse: new destruction has resulted from the intensification of the military operations; the OAS has sabotaged part of the social, administrative, and cultural infrastructure; the departure of four-fifths of the French population has deprived the country of its technicians and its qualified workers; the reduction in military strength stationed in the country has slowed down the influx of capital destined to finance their administrative and private expenses.

Of course new investments have been made, in conformity with the Constantine Plan. But the extreme caution of private investors, Algerians as much as foreigners, has kept these investments very much below predicted levels. A significant part of the sums invested was devoted to the current expenses of metropolitan administration, especially military, in Algeria. This money evidently created neither wealth nor employment. In total, the plan was a failure because it was a political paradox: capitalism could not engage in the construction of a bourgeois Algeria until it had obtained guarantees from the nationalist leaders concerning invested wealth and the transfer of capital and profits. The Evian compromise was destined to present the future Algerian government with a *fait accompli*: the potential local bourgeoisie was granted financial assistance, some satisfaction of self-esteem, a few economic advantages, and guarantees against a possible uprising by the masses in exchange for which it conceded economic and political advantages to the petroleum producers, to the armed forces, to the colonists, to companies of all kinds. Such was the basis for the sketchy bourgeois offensive at the end of the summer and the beginning of the autumn of 1962.

A Society Absent from Itself

Ripples on the Surface

But just as it has failed to be a peasant state, the Benbellist state has not yet become a bourgeois state. The events of autumn show this. When the time for plowing had arrived, and the winter approached, the question of farms, work, and hunger was asked before the government had taken any collective action on the subject. In the Constantinois and certain regions of the Oranie, big farms were occupied, and management committees were elected in the villages. The work and its product were divided among the unemployed fellahs. On the plateau of the Sétifois, it even reached the point of requisitioning, in the presence of the property owner, farms considered by the peasants to be insufficiently cultivated.

The plowing campaign announced by the government unleashed the movement. Officially, it was limited to soliciting the loan of their agricultural materials from the European colonists and rich Algerian farmers, once their own plowing was done. On October 8, the ministers and regional authorities met at the Oran prefecture to launch the operation in the region. The president of the National Office of Vacant Properties expressed the position of the ruling circles as follows: "No enterprise will be restarted without prior study. At any rate, we still envisage the eventual return of property owners, for the right to property remains intact, and the rules that are being prepared will determine under what conditions a firm will be able to continue its activity." At the same meeting, the director of agriculture and forests specified that this campaign meant, as far as equipment was concerned, "an amicable mobilization of underused tractors."³¹ Peasant good sense stretched the interpretation of these rules here and there: they put the tractors into service without waiting for permission from the property owners and, if permission was refused, the machines tended to catch fire.

This movement should not mislead us, however: its claims remain elementary. The peasants want work and bread. They plowed the abandoned land, in the large arable plateaus of the east and the west and in the regions where intensive colonization was most concentrated, like Boufarik, but the movement was still not widespread. In any case, the management committees did not extend their activities further. And even in these regions, their initiatives remained timid. Very soon they encountered needs they could not fulfill by themselves: spare parts, construction material for the rehabilitation of homes, cash advances. The local authorities were thus able to block the peasants' initiatives immediately if necessary.

Nonetheless, peasant hostility to the transfer of French cultivations to the Algerian bourgeoisie, and to all speculative activities in general, obliged the

government to decree on October 17 the “freezing” of vacant agricultural properties, the annulment of contracts signed after July 1, 1962, and of the acts of sale or rent concluded abroad. On October 20, *Le Monde* still entitled its special correspondent’s dispatch “The Landless Fellahs Wait for the Agrarian Reform Announced by the Government.” But, on October 23, it announced that “the plowing campaign will permit a temporary relief of the fellahs’ poverty and will calm their impatience.” The next day, the government agreed to the proposals made by the FLN cadres at their national conference October 15 to 20: its decree forbade transactions with regard to *all* property and movable goods and the institution of management committees in the vacant agricultural firms. Finally, on October 25, this last measure was extended to *all* the abandoned enterprises: industrial, artisan, mining, commercial.

The timid initiative of a few peasants sufficed to shift the situation. The state was fragile and uncertain enough to be unbalanced by a weak push. At the same time, Ben Bella seized the chance offered by the campaigns to take his distance from the monopolists. In annulling all property deals since independence, he tried to halt the formation of the new bourgeoisie. By instituting management committees for all the vacant properties, even in the firms where there had been no spontaneous movement, he tried to create a “collectivized” public sector that would be removed from the bourgeois, but also from the workers if perchance they wanted to take a step further. The October decrees specified in effect that the committees were only permitted in the case of vacant properties, that they had to obtain the agreement of the prefect, that the property owner’s rights were not called into question, and that in the case of the latter’s return, management and the profits were to be shared between the owner and the workers.

These limited measures gave the French government the pretext to react in the name of the Evian accords. On the occasion of the incident of the RTF [French television and radio] of Algiers, it recalled its ambassador for consultations. Rumor has it that, taking everything into account, “French goodwill could not be as great as it would have been if almost all the Europeans had remained in Algeria.”³² This warning drew its force from the fact that it was issued at the time when Washington, after Ben Bella’s visit to Cuba, postponed its discussions with Algiers on the subject of American aid sine die. To tell the truth, de Gaulle is quite ready to seize the chance to get out of his responsibilities toward Algeria: Germany has replaced Algeria not only on the front page of the dailies, but also in first place among France’s clients.³³ The French will easily give up on Mascara wine. As for petroleum, the companies have the means to defend it. Finally, the strategic interest of the country has become nonexistent in the epoch of intercontinental missiles. It is only considerations of political opportunism,

whether national or international, that prohibit abandonment. But they allow neglect.

Is the Algerian government constrained to choose between the peasants and capital? Not at all. It continues its winding course. Its president calls Castro “comrade” after having, the day before, dined at Kennedy’s table, declares in the same breath that he does not want multiple parties in Algeria but that he doesn’t want just one either, and, without “calling into question” the Evian accords, wishes, however, to “modify” them.³⁴

There would be no end to a list of the contradictions encountered in the application of the Tripoli program: Giving the land to the peasants without touching French property. Compensating for expropriations and developing the nonagricultural sector. Obtaining the financial assistance of a primarily rural capitalism and bringing about an agrarian revolution. Putting an end to the dislocation of the economy by asking for capital from imperialism, which had caused the dislocation. Mobilizing the masses for a collectivized revolution and not causing the bourgeoisie any trouble. Seeking the support of the most traditionalist sectors in Islamic and Arabic matters while having to take radical measures concerning education and perhaps birth control. Erecting customs barriers against France and continuing to sell it wine at special prices.

But none of these contradictions can reach a critical level as long as the peasants, the workers, the youth of the cities—the categories that participated most actively in the struggle of liberation—do not call into question, when one or another of these contradictions occurs, the orientation or the absence of orientation that Ben Bella’s power signifies.

From the viewpoint of classical political categories, Benbellism is impossible. Simplifying it to make it fit these categories, it would define itself by the following policy: leaving capitalism (actual French and potential Algerian) free rein in the industrial and commercial sectors, and giving satisfaction to the peasants by setting up agricultural cooperatives and state farms wherever they are technically desirable by redistributing farms elsewhere.³⁵ But at the level of this strategy, the contradiction already appears that had to make it impossible: the integrity of the excolonial domain is used as a criterion for the supply of capitalist aid. Yet the constitution of a semi-“collectivized” or “collectivized” sector through the sharing of the large farms among the peasants requires reparations, and Paris will garnish the compensation due to the property owners from the aid promised in Algiers.

An analysis at the deeper level of social attitudes or structures encounters the same structural impossibility: French aid would remain untouched even if it served more for speculation on land, buildings, or trade than for the financing of productive investments. The new Algerian bourgeoisie does not have or will not have any more social consistency, economic capacity, or responsibility in relation to the country than any other African bourgeoisie;

the mercantile precapitalist tradition does not disappear of its own accord in three months.

Always from the same viewpoint, one could say that these contradictions can be suppressed and these impossibilities removed by a strong political apparatus: by a party that would be the mouthpiece and the ear of the leadership among the masses and consequently capable of agitating them as a bogeyman to scare French capitalism and oblige the latter to give up all or part of the compensation, and also capable of training and restraining them so that their initiatives would not scare away investors; by a state that imposes an economic and social discipline on the new bourgeoisie and a long “austerity” on the workers, a state that would have no pity on its own servants; by an ideology in which each social stratum could find the means of accepting its lot in a working society.

Depth of the Crisis

But we have to wake up from this dream. These would be the prospects—that of the reinforcement of political apparatuses, that of bureaucratization—if the contradictions of which we spoke above tore apart not only three accountants and ten leaders in Algiers but also the very flesh of society, if the problems posed by work, land, school, and financing provoked collective responses among those who are their victims (the unemployed, the peasants, the workers, the young), provoked as complete a consciousness as possible of the crisis of this society and a group response to this crisis. Then the problems of Algeria would move beyond ministerial files, they would pass on to the only terrain on which they could receive a real solution, the terrain of the social struggle, and they would take shape as dramatic alternatives: for or against the poor peasants, for or against French capitalism, for or against the *ulémas*, for or against the monopolists, for or against the FLN party. A political apparatus can only reinforce itself by remaining at this level because it responds to a need present in society or in certain classes, because objectives arise in people’s minds and actions are sketched out spontaneously. If, despite the efforts made by Mohammed Khider and Rabah Bitat, the construction of the cells and federations of the new party failed during the autumn of 1962, it was because a mass organization cannot be built without the masses, from the top down and out of nothing.

This is not to say that the development of class struggle would make things clear and that the attitude to take would be dictated by the unambiguous content of the adverse camps. Not only does the class struggle never offer pure situations, so to speak—in Algeria, the class struggle could not take place right away on the only terrain where ambiguity is reduced to a minimum, that of exploitation. The problem posed to the country, the content of its

crisis, is not that of socialism. The word may well be on the pens or the lips of the leaders, but its spirit does not breathe among the masses, and it cannot because the present social crisis is not the result of the incapacity of capitalism to assure the development of the country, in the fullest sense of the word: not just that of production and revenue, but also of social relations, personality, and culture. On the contrary, the crisis is the result of the failed development of capitalism itself as positive human domination of elementary needs: to work, to eat, not to die of hunger and sickness. Even when the crisis took shape in Algerian society, the response that could be provided remained ambiguous; for it is not true that to struggle against the poverty left as a heritage to the Algerian people by the imperialism of the colonial epoch is to struggle against all exploitation.

The truth is that development is one thing and socialism another. In the present conditions of the world domination of capitalism under the Russian bureaucratic form or under the Western imperialist form, a once dependent country can only begin to reverse the mechanism of underdevelopment by a massive investment in labor. This means, at least for "overpopulated" countries like Algeria, that the unemployed labor force is used to the maximum; it also means that the greatest part of the supplementary product is not redistributed but reinvested in production—which means overall, for workers, peasants, and employees, additional work without a notable improvement in living conditions. In taking power in an underdeveloped country that achieves independence, the native bourgeoisie or bureaucracy is expected to satisfy the elementary aspirations of the masses. This involves destroying the social and economic basis of underdevelopment (inequalities of development that, in all the sectors of activity, result from imperialist penetration) so as to divide work and its product among the workers as best it can. From this strict point of view, the real difference between the domination of the bourgeoisie and that of the bureaucracy is that the first does not carry out capital accumulation and does not transform society (each of these incapacities accounts for the other), while the second manages to do this for good or ill.³⁶ It is still the case that development is theoretically and practically achievable, even in a single country. All it takes is to understand development as the more or less complete suppression of the inequalities inherited from the preceding era and the more or less rapid increase of productive capacities. This function can be assumed by a bureaucratic or bourgeois-bureaucratic authority.

But, once again, such an authority can only constitute itself on the basis of a real social crisis, on the basis of action by the rural and urban masses in search of a solution. No choice is necessary if its options are not actually embodied at the level of social turmoil by several opposing classes (and finally by two opposing classes), each offering the response that it is able and willing to give to the crisis. The situation in Algeria is for the time being distinctly

different from this. The question is not to know which side to take—for that there would have to be sides—it is a matter of peering into the fog of the present situation to see what forces, with what goals and what means, may emerge.

Of course, there are signs that this search is not hopeless, that the Algerian population is not purely and simply absent from its problems.

The peasants shook off their lethargy somewhat at the time of the autumn plowing. The dissatisfaction of the city workers, even if it never reached the point of direct action, nevertheless sufficed to stiffen the UGTA [Algerian General Union of Workers] against the offensive launched against it by the authorities: not only were local officials reelected, but the union as a whole staked its claim to autonomy from the government. In the same way, the students of the UGEMA [students' union] adopted a critical attitude toward the authorities. The “constructive opposition” of the Aït Ahmed tendency (which enjoyed a certain influence among the young) and that of the Algerian Communist party, though essentially opportunist, nevertheless obliged the authorities to come to terms with an important sector of public opinion. The militants who gathered behind Boudiaf in the PRS [socialist revolutionary path] are doubtless only a handful of adventurist bureaucrats mixed with the most conscious workers. Even if the ideology expressed in the tracts and declarations³⁷ of this party hardly lends itself to critique, there is no assurance that it is really shared, discussed, and elaborated by its members; its composite and embryonic character makes it impossible to analyze the party fully in the absence of further information. Nonetheless, the creation of this group has a symbolic value. Other signs of activity could be noted—for example, the immense popularity of the Cuban revolution among the city dwellers or the banners saying “No to salaries of 500,000” that were unfurled at the November 1 festivals under the eyes of the deputies suspected of wanting to pay themselves such salaries. The peasants, the employees, the students, and the workers continue to look for a solution to everyday difficulties. Even if many of the unemployed, having run out of options, leave to find work abroad, the consciousness that only a general reorientation can provide the solution in question exists. A link is established between the lack of work and the image of the Cuban revolution, between the race for seats or the bourgeois offensive over land ownership and the idea of what the construction of a popular state or the probity of a prefect should be—and the difference makes itself felt in many minds.

But these signs, if they suffice to make the activity of a revolutionary avant-garde in this country possible and legitimate, do not indicate a latent orientation among the masses, which this avant-garde might attempt to free, specify, and diffuse. The signs of dissatisfaction are one thing, those of aspiration another. The first are easily apparent in the fact that the Algerians,

be they peasants or workers, young or old, men or women, have not only failed to take any important initiative for months, but also respond only weakly if at all to the appeals of the leaders, whether those of the opposition or those in power. However, the *need* for change would have to appear for one to be able to say "That's where Algeria is headed."

A collectivity can be incapable of measuring up to its problems in two ways. In the first case, one group differentiates itself from the collectivity and dominates it as a class, as the social embodiment of that society's impotence to understand and guide itself and at the same time as the instrument of response to the social crisis. This group then imposes its goals, creates its means of coercion, installs its conception of human society. In the second case, the weakness of society cannot embody itself in a ruling group, and imagination fails to measure up to the social crisis at the same time that no material force exists, in the productive or political apparatus, that can serve to unify social diversity. The political categories we apply to the first kind of situation cannot be applied to the second. A state without social basis, a power without power, a party without cadres, ideology, and organization, leaders without leadership—all become possible in this case. To try to assign class motifs to such a politics, to decode its acts and its declarations with the key borrowed from a political universe where conflicts and their consciousness have become institutional, is to perform an abstraction.

That is not to say that Ben Bella can do whatever he wants, that anything is possible, and that the history of Algeria has no meaning. The situation is quite the contrary: Ben Bella can do almost nothing, the field of the possible is minuscule, and if Algeria has no meaning for itself at this time, this is the result of a failure to grasp that meaning rather than of the fact that Algeria is meaningless. Thus the minimum that has to be done to cure unemployment cannot be done with the help of the capitalist on the spot (as was already explained), nor with the help of the unemployed workers in the cities and the countryside, because they cannot see a solution and lack the means to solve their own problem collectively. In these conditions, Ben Bella leaves the question of work to settle itself through the massive emigration of the unemployed to France.³⁸ Thanks to the hiring of an important section of the Algerian work force, French capitalism remains what it was before independence: the beneficiary of the crisis that its domination has provoked in Algeria. At the limit, this kind of government policy means that nothing has happened since 1954 and that summer 1962 was only a slightly more prolonged vacation. One could perform the same demonstration for the question of schooling or that of technical training. In the absence of a living alternative model among the masses, in the absence of any reply to a crisis that touches every element of society, the old structures cannot be fully

liquidated; on the contrary, they return to life because they guarantee the functioning of the society, even if on the most minimal level.

Algeria cannot remain without a response to its problems indefinitely. To say this is not to pronounce an eternal truth. First, it is not an eternal truth that a society cannot, for years, remain fallow: if nothing comes to trouble the minimal functioning assured by the fragile state at its head, there is no need for a crisis to break out from which a class might emerge to take over leadership. But above all, Algeria is not a society without history whose structures and culture are in momentary disarray (a century-long moment), it is not a society that could return to its precolonial condition.

Capitalism has disintegrated Algeria's traditional communities, starved and exiled its peasants, created a proletariat of emigrants, stifled the petite bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie. If no class could provide a response to the crisis evoked by this destruction, it is because there was no fully established class, with a social function, an economic role, political instruments, and a conception of history and society. Of course, none of these features is ever completely distinct in a class; the transfusion of ways of life, ways of thinking, and interests continues between one class and another, even in the most developed societies. But in Algeria the major poles of society were not sufficiently differentiated for the bourgeoisie to lose its exclusive desire for property and domesticity, for the workers to be cut off from their villages and find out about the condition of the proletarian with no turning back. Still less was it possible for the peasants—the most rebellious survivors of the precapitalist epoch even in Europe—to be reclassified, according to the alternatives imposed on them by farming for profit, as either rich farmers or agricultural workers. All these categories exist, it is true, but in an embryonic state, and seven years of war were not enough for another society to develop in the womb of the old colonial society. If the infant bureaucracy represented by the FLN during these years was stillborn, it was, as I said, because it was a social composite: on the one hand, none of the strata that were represented there had the necessary consistency to take sole possession of the apparatus and direct it toward its own solution; on the other hand, the conflict between the Algerian classes had not reached a point of such intensity that the apparatus itself was able to and forced to bypass them to stifle their antagonisms and to build a model of the future society that would be accepted by all, whether they liked it or not. In particular, the fact that “communism” could not root itself deeply in the Algerian proletariat and that consequently a consciousness of the social crisis and the capacity to remedy it through the bureaucratic process (of which the Communist party was elsewhere the instrument) were impossible here is a supplementary sign of the relative lack of differentiation in society. The Algerian workers and peasants did not resist Stalinism on the basis of an antibureaucratic critique, but because they had not had to suffer

the relentless offensive of a national bourgeoisie and because the crisis had not demonstrated the incapacity of this bourgeoisie to respond to society's problems.

Capitalism did not reorganize a new society, but it did disorganize the old one. It is unnecessary to reemphasize the intensity of the disintegration to which it subjected precapitalist institutions. But it is important to draw the following conclusion: the Algerians were expelled from their traditional universe; they could not seek shelter there from the present crisis. And this not only for economic or demographic reasons (subsistence agriculture can no longer feed the population), but for reasons that touch on all the forms of social life: the set of needs, behavior, and values that formed a culture a hundred years ago and that regulated work, familial relations, and the use of everyday objects—the traditional representation of the relations between humans and the world—all became outmoded, at least in the eyes of the social category most detached from tradition by its age and its way of life, the young people of the cities, be they workers, employees, schoolteachers, lycéens, students, or unemployed. The ferment of the revolution to come must be looked for among them; it is they who from now on feel most intensely the insufficiency of all the existing rags of traditional culture or the debris of the colonial past as responses to the whole set of problems that are now posed. In December 1960, this same youth, by defying the submachine guns of the French troops, literally carried off victory. The force of the movement that raised them then, its demonstrated capacity for autonomous initiative, its resolution, its very abnegation, show it to be the milieu par excellence where the consciousness of and the desire for another Algeria can be born.

This country is still not the dwelling place of those who inhabit it; it remains to be conquered. *Some crises* may shake it, may provoke famine, unemployment, misery, despair. But none of them will be decisive, and none will bring a response to *the crisis* from which Algeria suffers, until a social class or a strongly organized and implanted section of society builds a model of new social relations and makes everyone accept it.

Notes

Foreword

1. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1984), p. 3.
2. As many indigenous Marxists in colonial struggles have argued, an appeal to the “astatic mode of production” is not sufficient to explain the multiple contradictions between anticolonial nationalism and the economicistic thesis of class struggle as the sole motor of history. Nationalism, as Lyotard shows in Algeria, moves across class divisions in complex ways and causes the merely ideological (national consciousness) to act as a determining force in and upon history.
3. A more detailed theorization is provided in Lyotard’s *L’enthousiasme: Critique kantienne de l’histoire* (Paris: Galilée, 1986).
4. See also chapter 31, “The State and Politics in the France of 1960.”
5. Stanley Aronowitz, in *The Politics of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), provides an excellent account of this process in the United States.
6. In the sense that Deleuze and Guattari speak of the minor in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
7. For a detailed analysis of the distinction between a politics of justice and a politics of truth, see Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).
8. J.-F. Lyotard and J.-L. Thébaud, *Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
9. Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: ‘What Is Enlightenment?’” in *Political Writings* (2nd edition), ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 54.
10. The tendency to identify the proletariat as the unconscious of history appears in some of the essays in *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1973). Dangerously Manichean, it assumes a Hegelian understanding of history as a rational process and merely opposes the direction of that process.
11. Some feminisms, one should perhaps say. Other feminisms have of course proposed a separate women’s identity or an undifferentiated bisexuality as resolutions to the enigma of sexual difference. On this see Lyotard’s “One thing at stake in women’s struggles” in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin, trans. Deborah J. Clarke with Winifred Woodhull and John Mowitt (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

1. Tomb of the Intellectual

1. *Le Monde*, July 16, 1983.

2. The Differend

1. [For a more heroic account of the electoral struggle of the socialists, see R.W.Johnson, *The Long March of the French Left* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981).—Trans.]
2. [Chirac, mayor of Paris, has been François Mitterrand's right-wing rival for the presidency (along with ex-president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing) for over a decade now. His hour has not yet come.—Trans.]
3. [This point is elaborated by Lyotard in *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), sections 12 and 13 (pp. 9–10).—Trans.]

3. For a Cultural Nonpolicy

1. *Le Nouvel Observateur* asked in a questionnaire what attitude each of those addressed [Lyotard and others] was going to take, as an intellectual, in the face of the socialist power and its cultural politics. In particular, would he actively and personally take part in it? The designated space and the time prohibited answers worthy of the name, but they sufficed to question the “facts” evoked and invoked in the questions of the weekly magazine.

2. *Conseil supérieur des corps universitaires*, which at the time decided on careers in higher education.

4. New Technologies

1. Such was the formulation of the subject in the program of the seminar organized by the CEP [Public Education Council] and IRIS [Institute for Research in Computer Science] during the first semester of 1982.

2. [I have preserved the term “Idea” (capitalized), though Lyotard’s Kantian account of the regulatory absolute (which exceeds the concept) has often been translated as “ideal.” I avoid “ideal” so as to forestall a too-ready accusation of “idealism.”—Trans.]

3. Here I mean by idea a concept of reason that exceeds the limits of our experience. One cannot present examples or cases of it, but only analogues. These are almost what the decision makers call models. They are always debatable. They give rise to dialectical arguments, to rhetorical undertakings of persuasion (including propaganda), to studies (including this seminar), to tests (of an experimental character).

4. It is useless to describe in detail the interactions between the four domains. These interactions were constituted into a hierarchy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Keynes is the symbolic name of these interactions).

5. Only an ignoramus would try to “answer” this question.

5. Wittgenstein “After”

1. [The philosophers of the Enlightenment.—Trans.]

7. A Svelte Appendix to the Postmodern Question

1. A modest contribution to the “postmodernity” dossier that *Babylone* was preparing.
2. [See “Philosophy and Painting in the Age of their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity,” in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), for a detailed reading of Diderot by Lyotard.—Trans.]
3. [A reference to the thought of the group Socialism or Barbarism.—Trans.]
4. [Literally “slenderness.”—Trans.]

8. Dead Letter

1. [In the sense of the Latin *sensus communis*, the understanding of community that comes with a common understanding. The French does not have the implication of “common sense” as “received wisdom” or “moderation” that the term does in English.—Trans.]
2. [*Faculty* is capitalized here to indicate the institutional grouping: the Faculty of Arts and Letters, which is assigned the task of attending to “culture” in the French university system.—Trans.]
3. Psychoanalytic speech would seem to be an exception to this rule: doesn’t it provide a cure? But to cure is not to find a meaning for activities that were intrinsically contradictory, it is the destructuring and the restructuring of the subject’s manner of being-there. It is a revolution: in this respect psychoanalysis is an exception from anthropological interventions. Culture is people.

9. Preamble to a Charter

1. [According to this plan, proposed in 1966, tertiary education was to be split between two-year vocational degrees and four-year degrees. This involved an effective reduction in the number of university places.—Trans.]
2. [A reference to the strategy of *détournement* practiced by the Situationist International under the leadership of Guy Debord. See “Detournement as Negation and Prelude” in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. and trans. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), which defines *détournement* as “the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble” (p. 55).—Trans.]
3. [Lyotard is punning on the faculty of letters and the faculty of human sciences.—Trans.]

10. Nanterre, Here, Now

1. [The teacher unions for instructors, high school teachers, and university teachers. The University of Paris campus at Nanterre, opened in 1964, was the focal point of student political activity and the home of the March 22 movement, named to commemorate the student occupation of the administration building in protest at the arrest of six members of the National Vietnam Committee on March 22, 1968.—Trans.]
2. The passages in italics are provided by a group of students.
3. [Money-Commodity-Commodity-Money: Marx’s algorithm for capitalist exchange, sometimes also rendered M-C-M. Marx’s point is that, far from money being the neutral medium of exchange (Commodity-Money-Commodity), the capitalist marketplace replaces use value with exchange value as the ruling form of value.—Trans.]
4. [An allusion to Lenin’s pamphlet of the same title.—Trans.]

5. [M.Francés's statement:] *Before taking the decision to open the campus to the police, the members of the council must clearly imagine how this measure will be translated in deeds. The police authorities will not be content to station one or two agents on the paths. Several police cars will certainly be sent. The effect of this presence will certainly be disastrous, will unleash violences greater than those that we just heard listed. It is also beyond doubt that this presence alone will make a good number of students from several elements presently isolated, who indulge in plundering, stick together. I am thus hostile to opening the campus to the police. Another solution has been proposed: checking ID cards at the entrance to the campus. It seems to me to be the only opportune solution, despite the difficulties in enforcing it.*

6. [Edgar Faure, de Gaulle's education minister.—Trans.]

7. [The Committee for Democratic Reform, a noncommunist group of teachers committed to reforming the university system.—Trans.]

8. [Unité d'enseignement et de recherche (UER): an administrative grouping within the French university system, equivalent to a department.—Trans.]

9. [Georges Séguy and Eugène Descamps, leaders of, respectively, the Communist Trade Union (CGT) and the more conservative CFDT (Confédération française démocratique du travail).—Trans.]

10. [Lyotard notes the irony that the French term for continuous assessment is “contrôle continu.”—Trans.]

11. [Flins-sur-Seine is a major automobile manufacturing town. The Renault factory there was the scene of a major strike in 1968, about which Jean-Pierre Thou made the film *Oser lutter, oser vaincre* (*Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win*). The CGT film in question is Paul Seban's *La CGT en Mai*.—Trans.]

12. [Alain Geismar, president of the university teachers' union (SNE Sup).—Trans.]

11. March 23

1. [See note 1 to “Nanterre, Here, Now” (chapter 10) on the movement of March 22.—Trans.]

2. [The French is preserved here to underline the allusion to situationism, particularly to Debord's *The Society of Spectacle*. *Mise en spectacle* means the dramatization of social activity as spectacle.—Trans.]

3. [Led by Pannekoek, to whom Lyotard refers in chapter 24 of this volume.—Trans.]

4. [The remarks on “bound energy” that follow rely explicitly on Freud's use of the term in his account of the functioning of the psychic processes.—Trans.]

5. [The two Freudian drives, eros and thanatos.—Trans.]

6. Daniel Singer, *Prelude to Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), p. 32.

7. [In the sense of rhetorical figures. The opposition of discourse to figure is treated at length by Lyotard in *Discours, figure* (Paris: Klinckensieck, 1971).—Trans.]

13. Endurance and the Profession

1. [Prisoners who during an escape attempt turned against guards who had previously aided them.—Trans.]

14. *Ersiegerungen*

1. [A portmanteau word, made up of the name of the college (Siegen) at which Lyotard was teaching the seminar he describes and the German *Ersetzung*, meaning repayment. Thus, *Ersiegerungen* would mean something like “the repayment of debts at Siegen.”—Trans.]
2. [*Outre mur*, literally “beyond a wall,” plays on *outremer*, meaning “lapis lazuli” or “ultramarine” and *outre-mer*, “overseas.”—Trans.]
3. [Public sphere (an allusion to Habermas’s essay on this topic).—Trans.]
4. [Uncanny (an allusion to Freud’s essay on this topic).—Trans.]
5. [Literally, “the message is its contents.”—Trans.]
6. [In English in the original.—Trans.]

15. Born in 1925

1. [Poetic theory that insists upon the ritual or sonorous materiality of language, with particular reference to the early Situationist International. Lyotard’s specific reference is to the latter.—Trans.]
2. [A children’s library, widely published in France, aimed at children between ten and fifteen years old.—Trans.]
3. [Title of a collection of poems by Francis Ponge, literally “the bias of/for things.”—Trans.]
4. Sartre, *Situations I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 288.

16. A Podium without a Podium

1. [The program, for all its implications of a podium for free speech, imposed the following conditions, all of which participate in a certain metaphysics of the present speaking voice: Programs must be taped live, without use of montage techniques, and must not use any inserted film clips except for the occasional still. The entire program must be filmed in not more than three sessions. Only one retake of each sequence is allowed. In light of these conditions, Lyotard’s refusal of the authentic direct voice of the intellectual takes on a particular significance.—Trans.]
2. [See *Just Gaming* and *The Differend* for such a demonstration.—Trans.]

17. *Oikos*

1. [This essay was originally written in English and French, with German headings in the “Answers to Questions” section. Some stylistic modifications have been made in those parts written in English in the interests of clarity, but no attempt has been made to efface the singularity of Lyotard’s English usage.—Trans.]
2. The accumulation of facts and in particular of numbers in Holger Strohm’s discourse is a very old form of persuasion. This has an effect of stupefaction on the hearers, and it belongs to the rhetoric of persuasion. You can look at the very frequent presence of scientists on television, which has exactly the same function: properly speaking, not to inform but to stupefy the public; the public is very eager for stupefaction. Personally, I consider the use of these facts to be a matter of rhetoric.
3. [*Zurückgezogene* means “the withdrawn,” *Abgeschiedene* “the secluded.”—Trans.]
4. [A reference to Lyotard’s book *Economie libidinale*.—Trans.]

18. The General Line (for Gilles Deleuze)

1. Nina Berberova, *Le roseau révolté*, translated from the Russian by Luba Jergenson (Arles: Actes Sud, 1988).

19. The Wall, the Gulf and the Sun: A Fable

1. [The talk was delivered in Germany. This essay was originally written in English; I have made a few minor grammatical modifications in the text.—Trans.]

20. German Guilt

1. [*The Question of Guilt*, available in English as Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Dial, 1947).—Trans.]

2. [Life in a mask.—Trans.]

3. M.Dufrenne and P.Ricoeur, *Karl Jaspers et la philosophie de l'existence* (Paris: Seuil, 1947).

21. Heidegger and “the jews”: A Conference in Vienna and Freiburg

1. [These paragraphs and the long quotation that follows are drawn from *Heidegger and “the jews.”* I reproduce here the translation by Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts (University of Minnesota Press, 1990). David Carroll’s excellent introduction to that volume provides a good commentary.—Trans.]

2. [The organization responsible for the rounding up and deportation of Jews in the East.—Trans.]

3. [Lower-case *being* here translates *étant* (Heidegger’s *seiend*) as opposed to *être*, which is translated as *Being* (Heidegger’s *Sein*). The distinction is between beings and Being in general, between the ontic and the ontological.—Trans.]

22. The Grip (*Mainmise*)

1. [Literally, “takes back the hand,” in the sense of the English “take over the helm,” with a play on *manchot* as “one-handed” or “one-armed.”—Trans.]

2. [Latin *se-ducere*, to lead away from oneself.—Trans.]

3. [The original says “principle,” which would seem to be a misprint.—Trans.]

4. [The theologically well-informed “you” addressed here and elsewhere is that of the readers of *Autre Temps*, a journal of “social Christianity.”—Trans.]

5. [The Kapos were trustees in Nazi concentration camps (often German communists, imprisoned since before the war).—Trans.]

6. [The word *liaison* brings an echo of “alliance” or “covenant” to the notion of tying in the sense of binding. I have had recourse to the ambiguity of “bond” and “bind” in order to translate it.—Trans.]

23. Europe, the Jews, and the Book

1. [Leader of the left-wing French Popular Front in the 1930s.—Trans.]

24. The Name of Algeria

1. [For an account of the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, see Cornelius Castoriadis's "General Introduction" to his *Political and Social Writings* (2 vol.), ed. and trans. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).—Trans.]
2. [Lyotard here alludes to Lenin's pamphlet "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," published in 1917. See V.I.Lenin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), pp. 634–731.—Trans.]
3. [The POUM, or Parti ouvrier d'unification marxiste (Marxist United Workers' Party) was the grouping that united noncommunist left-wing forces, usually anarchist, on the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War.—Trans.]
4. [Amadeo Bordiga (1889–1970) was one of the founders of the Italian Communist party.—Trans.]
5. [Lyotard here alludes to the form of attention prescribed by Freud for the analyst during a session of psychoanalysis.—Trans.]
6. [Lyotard here alludes to the dictum of Chairman Mao that the Communist party should be in the workers' movement like "a fish in water."—Trans.]
7. [The mountain range of central Algeria.—Trans.]
8. [An industrial suburb of Paris.—Trans.]
9. [A city in northeastern Algeria.—Trans.]
10. [The title of the book in which chapters 24 through 34 originally appeared.—Trans.]
11. [Mohammed Ramdani was responsible for editing and introducing the volume *La guerre des Algériens*.—Trans.]

25. The Situation in North Africa

1. The clampdown on Cap Bon (January 28–February 1, 1952) constitutes the repressive phase that leads from riots to the development of an underground resistance. This schema is almost identical for the three countries, although at different times.
2. [The Istiqlal, or PDI, was the Moroccan party of independence struggle, the Néo-Destour the party of Tunisian independence, led by Bourguiba.—Trans.]
3. In 1941, 60.6 percent of imports came from France, 63 percent of exports went there. In 1938, France carried out 16 percent of its total trade with North Africa (figures calculated according to Despois, *L'Afrique du Nord*, 482–84).
4. Figure calculated according to *Problèmes économiques* 336 (June 1954).
5. Old francs.
6. Figures cited by Sauvy, *L'Express*, February 26, 1955.
7. In 1951, out of 8 billion in private investments in Morocco, 4.5 billion went to the former versus 2.6 billion to the latter. *Problèmes économiques* 300 (September 1953).
8. Vialas, "Le paysannat algérien," *Notes et études documentaires*, no. 1626.
9. The largest part of Algerian and Tunisian exports consists of agricultural materials; mineral products make up a quarter of the value of Moroccan exports and half of Tunisian exports.
10. Figures taken from Dresch in *L'industrialisation de l'AFN*, 224–28.
11. Dumont, *L'Algérie dans l'impasse*, 49. Hence proceeds the role of usury in the process of expropriation.
12. For Algeria alone, 600,000 families, or 3 million to 3.5 million persons.
13. For Algeria, 700,000 families, or 3.5 million to 4 million persons.
14. In 1946, Wisner estimated the proportion of the industrial and mining (semiagricultural) proletariat in the active population at 2 percent. Dumont, *L'Algérie dans l'impasse*, 27.

15. In Algeria, 100,000 agricultural workers in 25,000 concerns. All the preceding figures are taken from Vialas, "Le paysannat algérien."

16. In 1883, each inhabitant possessed five quintals of grains (feed grains included). In 1952, this figure was two quintals (Dumont, *L'Algérie dans l'impasse*, p. 55).

17. *Notes et études documentaires*, no. 1963 (December 1954).

18. Profit rates of several mining and agricultural companies in Tunisia in 1950: Djebel M'dilla, 30.45 percent; Djebel Djerissa, 45.68 percent; Djebel Mallonj, 74.22 percent; Fermes françaises, 66.25 percent. Adapted from *Notes et études documentaires*, no. 1553 (1952), cited in *Bulletin d'informations coloniales*, October 15, 1954: p. 6.

19. [Etoile nord-africaine, or Star of North Africa, was one of the primary independence organizations among Algerian migrant workers in France. Founded in 1926, it formed the basis for the MTLD.—Trans.]

20. [Messali Hadj was leader of Etoile nord-africaine from 1926 onward and a founder of the PPA. In 1947, he founded the MTLD, which later split into the MNA and the FLN.—Trans.]

26. The North African Bourgeoisie

1. The article that follows was written before the latest events that have just disrupted the barely established relations between Tunisia, Morocco, and France. It sheds light on the situation in which the arrest of the FLN leaders occurred. In one sense, the new wave of nationalism can allow the social problems that confronted the Moroccan and Tunisian governments to assume only secondary importance. But in another sense, and no doubt this aspect of the situation is not more important than the first, the fragile political edifice erected by Bourguiba and the sultan finds itself considerably weakened. Their "centrist" orientation is called into question under the pressure of the unbelievable offensive launched by the French government. (*Socialisme ou Barbarie*)

2. [Caid, from the Arabic *qa'id* (chief), was the name given to indigenous local magistrates in North Africa under French colonial rule. The term may also more generally refer to feudal lords.—Trans.]

3. [A reference to Trotsky's theory of uneven and combined development, usually invoked to explain the peculiarities of the Russian Revolution.—Trans.]

27. A New Phase in the Algerian Question

1. This article was already written when the second edition of *L'Etincelle* came out, distributed in 8,000 copies. There is little to be said about it. As usual, the fundamental analyses are put off until later, and the driving forces behind the bulletin seem especially concerned to prove their loyalty. Let us cite a phrase that summarizes the situation: "We know that dozens of comrades, discouraged and on the point of leaving the party, regained confidence and hope thanks to our initiative. It is a significant first result. We, the 'liquidators,' already act as a catalyst of life and renewal for the party."

On the other hand, on February 15, *L'Express* published a text emanating from an "oppositional group," distinct from that of *L'Etincelle*. There one finds a whimsical enough analysis of the diverse "tendencies" in the PCF [French Communist party] and a programmatic definition of socialism that discourages criticism, among others: "The socialism we want to realize is not identical to the present system of the Soviet Union. It ought to seek to combine the collective ownership of the essential means of production with an economic and political democracy in which this social ownership would not be an abstraction, but a reality perceptible to the consciousness of the members of the collectivity taken individually."

2. [A peasant revolt. The original jacquerie, like the English Peasant Revolt, occurred in the late fourteenth century, after the Black Death. It was bloodily put down by royal troops.—Trans.]

3. [*Uléma* or *ouléma*: a doctor of Muslim law, both a jurist and a theologian.—Trans.]

28. Algerian Contradictions Exposed

1. In the cities with a strong Muslim majority (Constantine, etc.), the FLN was not defeated; this proves the role played by the Europeans in the repression.

2. Official estimates: in February 1957, 20,000 fellahs; in February 1958, 35,000. Estimates of R.Uboldi (*Les Temps Modernes*, December 1957): 100,000 regular troops and 300,000 partisans.

3. See “A New Phase in the Algerian Question” [chapter 27].

4. D.Mothé, “Les ouvriers français et les Nord-Africains,” *Socialisme ou Barbarie* 21.

5. This is what Mothé’s article, which we have already cited, shows. Its conclusion of course imputes responsibility for the workers’ passivity on the Algerian question to the French Communist party, but the whole first part shows that this passivity rests on a much more profound separation, which is of a properly sociological order.

6. See “The North African Bourgeoisie” [chapter 26].

7. [The Committee of Public Safety was the radical ruling body in revolutionary France from 1793 to 1795, charged with accelerating the executive process.—Trans.]

8. Cited by C.-A.Julien, *L’Afrique du Nord en marche*, p. 133.

9. See “The North African Bourgeoisie” [chapter 26].

29. The “Counterrevolutionary” War, Colonial Society, and De Gaulle

1. [“Pieds-noirs” is a derogatory nickname for the colonial French of Algeria, with a tone and field of reference roughly equivalent to “white trash.”—Trans.]

2. We are taking this expression in the sense given in Massu’s confidential breviary *Contre-révolution, stratégie et tactique*.

3. [Chapter 28, “Algerian Contradictions Exposed.”—Trans.]

4. [General Salan was one of the four generals later involved in the 1961 putsch. In 1958 he was given the charge of maintaining the French Republic’s authority in Algeria.—Trans.]

5. [Saint-Cyr is the elite French military training school, the equivalent of West Point in the United States or Sandhurst in England.—Trans.]

6. *Le Monde*, May 30, 1958.

7. [Matignon is the official residence of the French prime minister.—Trans.]

30. The Social Content of the Algerian Struggle

1. [A detailed tactical account of maneuvers by right-wing groups, de Gaulle, and the army is omitted here.—Trans.]

2. [A *douar* is a rural administrative district. The word originates from the Arabic name for a nomadic encampment.—Trans.]

3. The journalists of the left and elsewhere, in continuing to wonder about plots hatched in the upper echelons of the army and aimed at de Gaulle, give a good indication of their comprehension of the problem. According to them, May 13 was never anything other than a

military putsch. Do they hope that the current regime will perish at the hands of its own troops? That would give one pause for thought about the confidence the “left” has in its own activity. In any case, this would be to leave out the fact that the current regime marks a consolidation of the capitalist state, which henceforth renders conspiracies generally ineffective.

4. [See “The ‘Counterrevolutionary’ War, Colonial Society and de Gaulle,” (chapter 29).—Trans.]

5. [An allusion to Clausewitz’s dictum that diplomacy is the continuation of war by other means.—Trans.]

6. This police control is what de Gaulle calls “the wide and profound contact [of the army] with the population,” which he says had never before been made. He makes this one of the achievements of the pacification. But, put back into real history, these “contacts” are a failure: they bear witness to, on the one hand, the previous lack of administration—that is, the exteriority of the Algerian state apparatus to the rural masses in particular—and, on the other hand, the present necessity of closely surrounding the population in order to safeguard the fiction of an *Algérie française*.

7. Over the past year, if one believes the communiqués of the General Staff, the French troops have eliminated six hundred combatants per week, destroyed hundreds of munitions dumps, recovered thousands of weapons, dismantled many networks, obtained massive results, and so on—and provided the strongest refutation of all this themselves by each week finding new combatants to put out of action, new munitions dumps to destroy, and so on. Six hundred *fellaghas* lost per week makes 30,000 per year, that is, the strength of the ALN officially recognized by Algiers. Consequently, either the figures are false (and it is certain that the six hundred victims are not all soldiers and that the ALN has many more than 30,000 men) or the ALN is capable of mending its losses as fast as it undergoes them. Or, finally, which is most likely, the two hypotheses are correct together: the total strength is indeed higher than 30,000, one baptizes every dead Algerian a “fellagha,” and the ability of the ALN units to regroup remains intact.

8. This was true above all of the regions where this tension had already reached a brutal breaking point: thus the 1945 massacres in the Constantinois and the Sétif regions remained present in everyone’s memory. We will return to this later on.

9. The rebel organization distinguishes between the Moudjahidines, regular combatants, and the Moussebilines, temporary partisans. One can conceive of intermediate states. Algiers figures the rebel strength at 30,000, sometimes 40,000. Yazid spoke in Monrovia of 120,000 combatants. If one keeps the figure of 80,000 *fellaghas*, that admits a one to six ratio between regular underground fighters and the army of repression, which seems to me to justify the absence of military successes on both sides. A higher ratio would give an appreciable advantage to the rebellion: this was the case before 1956. And inversely, the one to six ratio was that which the German generals, in 1949, judged necessary to set defenders and assailants at parity, according to their experience on the Russian front. See Ph. Guillaume, “La guerre et notre époque,” *Socialisme ou Barbarie* 3, p. 11.

10. J. Baulin in his book *Face au nationalisme arabe* cites this commentary of a collaborator with *Le Monde*: “To claim to buy off a nationalist movement is still OK; but to hope to get it at a discount...” (pp. 125–26). This exactly defines the extent of the subtlety of the “left” and the “intelligent bourgeoisie” in the Algerian question: set the price. It is moreover one of the remedies advocated by Baulin himself in the Arab question with the exception that he presents it openly as capitalism’s only coherent strategy.

11. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, vol 1. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), pp. 251–52.

12. See “A New Phase in the Algerian Question” [chapter 27].

13. [General Challe, chief of the French armed forces in Algeria since 1958, was one of the leaders of the putsch of April 1961, an anti-independence insurrection that united the extreme right and the French army in Algiers against de Gaulle.—Trans.]

14. [General Alphonse Juin was the French military governor of Morocco prior to independence.—Trans.]

15 To apply the notion of a bureaucracy to the really dominant class in Oriental societies and, more particularly, to that class that, in the guise of the Ottoman Empire, dominated the whole Near Eastern world from the Danube to the Persian Gulf, from Aden to the Maghreb, for more than three centuries does not arise from an acute form of generalizing bureaucratophobia, but rather allows one to establish the characteristics of the development of the Oriental world without tampering with history as the Stalinist historians do. Analysis shows, in effect, that the predominant relations of production in these societies belong to the order of slavery, in that the extraction of surplus value occurs under the *manifest* form of taxes in work (*corvées*) and in kind (levies on the products of labor). Yet the relations of production are not of a feudal order, because the class that appropriates the surplus value is not made up of lords who *privately* possess the means of production. The form of property is completely different from that which one sees in the Western Middle Ages: the land and the waters—that is, the essential elements of the means of production in these predominantly steppe regions given the low level of development of the forces of production—are the formal *property* of the sovereign; their *disposition*, that is, the social reality of property, belongs in fact to his functionaries. The *role* of this class of functionaries in the productive process clearly emerges in the perfect example of ancient Egypt: the extension of crops into the Nile valley required the full use of periodic floods; but the construction of embankments and rudimentary dams, the cutting of canals and reservoirs, the regulation of flow in the irrigated zones, the synchronization of the maneuvering of the gates, the prediction of the high-water levels in the different points of the valley, the immense labor by which humankind took possession of all of fertile Egypt could not be accomplished by scattered peasant communities. Once the zones that could be cultivated by means of local irrigation had been developed, the structure of dispersed villages or even of separate fiefdoms constituted an objective obstacle to the development of the productive forces. Bringing new lands under cultivation required the control of the whole valley from Aswan to the Delta—that is, the incorporation of all the workers into a centralized state.

16. *L'Entente*, February 23, 1936; quoted by C.-A. Julien, *L'Afrique du Nord en marche*, p. 110.

17. “The ideological unification of the Algerian people around the principle of the Algerian nation has already been achieved. Actual unification, unification through action, will continue to be our principal objective because we are convinced that it is the effective means of bringing oppressive imperialism to an end.” These words, from an editorial in *El Maghrib el Arabi* [the French-language newspaper of the MTLD] of January 16, 1948, express this situation accurately. The editorial adds, “We are extremely worried by certain developments,” alluding to the difficulty of achieving unity of action with bourgeois elements.

18. Daniel Mothé, “Les ouvriers français et les Nord-Africains,” *Socialisme ou Barbarie* 21, pp. 146 ff.

19. Such was no doubt the perspective of Ramdane, the former official for Algiers.

20. Algeria's overall annual income was in 1955 thought to be 537 billion francs (on the basis of figures given by Peyrega). The total income in the hands of Muslim Algerians could be calculated at 271 billion, according to the Maspétol report in 1953. The *Français d'Algérie* thus received appreciably half the overall production.

31. The State and Politics in the France of 1960

1. [The Jeanson network was a French clandestine organization—named after its leader—that sheltered deserters from the French army of Algeria and supported the independence movement.—Trans.]
2. [A declaration signed by 121 noncommunist French intellectuals affirming the right to refuse the draft.—Trans.]
3. [De Sérigny was a prominent right winger, editor of the newspaper *L'Echo d'Alger*, involved in the anti-independence insurrection of 1958.—Trans.]
4. See the collection of articles on “La crise française et le gaullisme” in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* 25 (July–August 1958).
5. [A summary of economic statistics detailing the crisis of the Fourth Republic is omitted here.—Trans.]
6. See Chaulieu, “Perspectives de la crise française.”
7. See P. Chaulieu, “Sur la dynamique du capitalisme,” *Socialisme ou Barbarie* 12 (August–September 1953).
8. See “The Social Content of the Algerian Struggle” [chapter 30].
9. *L'Express*, February 4, 1960.
10. At its height, in February 1959, registered unemployment was less than 1 percent of the labor force, and it has since declined.
11. In deficit by \$1,020 million in 1956, by \$1,080 million in 1957, and by \$480 million in 1958, this balance showed in 1959 a surplus of exports over imports of \$516 million.
12. In the fourth quarter of 1959, the index of industrial production was 11 percent higher than that of the fourth quarter of 1958.
13. See “Bilan,” *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, November–December 1958.
14. Which is not to say that it happens always or automatically.
15. See D. Mothé, “Les ouvriers et la culture,” *Socialisme ou Barbarie* 30 (April–May 1960).
16. [In English in original.—Trans.]
17. [An ironic allusion to the language of Stalinist communiqués, which tend to speak of “frank and comradely discussions” attendant upon the imposition of central policy.—Trans.]
18. [The analysis of this phrase of Karl Marx’s is conducted at length by Lyotard in “A Memorial for Marxism,” appended to *Peregrinations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).—Trans.]

32. Gaullism and Algeria

1. [Ahmed Ben Salah, Tunisian secretary of state for finance.—Trans.]
2. [Committee on the economic development of France.—Trans.]
3. [A trial of deserters and draft evaders in which the fact of French army torture of Algerian prisoners (especially by paratroopers) was adduced as a defense for the refusal to serve.—Trans.]
4. [Crowned emperor of Vietnam in 1925, Bao Dai abdicated in 1945 in favor of Ho Chi Minh’s Vietminh forces. He was recalled in 1948 by the French in order to serve as a figurehead in the war against the Vietminh. He was officially deposed in 1955 in an American-controlled referendum, which replaced him with Prime Minister Diem.—Trans.]

33. Algeria: Seven Years After

1. Among a population of 9 million Algerians. This would mean for present-day France 5 million dead, 5 million deported, several million émigrés, and more than a million interned.
2. The French post of Sakhiet was evacuated at the beginning of October.
3. [The Challe putsch or generals' putsch of April 1961 was led by four generals: Challe, Salan, Zeller, and Jouhand. This protest against Gaullist government policy by a coalition of extreme right wingers and army members fell apart after four days.—Trans.]
4. [The Constantine plan was the French plan for the economic development of Algeria passed by de Gaulle.—Trans.]
5. Tunis is again calling for the participation of Ben Bella and his comrades in the negotiations: this would be equivalent to a de facto recognition of the GPRA.

34. Algeria Evacuated

1. See "The Social Content of the Algerian Struggle" [chapter 30].
2. A striking image of which can be found in *La révolution algérienne par les textes*, ed. André Mandouze (Paris: Maspéro, 1961).
3. "One can in large part say that from August 1956 on, the FLN ceased to be a unitary organism and became a coalition, precisely a 'Front'; the former members of the MTLD and the UDMA, the Ulémas then penetrate into the ruling organizations without truly renouncing their individuality. It is from 1956 on that the present 'Front,' this magma, constitutes itself" (interview with M.Boudiaf, *Le Monde*, November 2, 1962).
4. Interview with M.Boudiaf, *Le Monde*, September 7, 1962.
5. See R.Gendarme, *L'économie de l'Algérie* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1959), pp. 189–237; P.Bourdieu, *The Algerians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962) [orig.: *Sociologie de l'Algérie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958)], passim. In the first edition of his book, Bourdieu emphasized above all the cultural differences prior to colonization, notably the disdain for agricultural tasks that the Arab-speaking regions had inherited from their nomadic ancestors. He says, for example: "This type of economy [of the Arab-speaking countries], where farming by the owner is rare and despised, where those who possess some wealth neglect work to taste the refinements of society-life, where agricultural work therefore always presupposes the cooperation of two parties, the property owner and the *khammès*, differs profoundly from that noted in the Berber countries" (77).
6. [A detailed description of political maneuvers within the Algerian independence movement, leading to Ben Bella's accession to leadership, is omitted here.—Trans.]
7. The Tripoli program was edited by the Internationalist Communist party (PCI), with a preface dated September 22, 1962, and a commentary by M.Pable, "Impressions et problèmes de la révolution algérienne." Another edition of the program was published at the same time by the "revolutionary tendency of the PCF (French Communist party)," with a preface signed "Le Communiste" and dated October 1, 1962. The text itself is identical in the two editions. The content of the preface of the PCI edition is summed up in this sentence: "The Algerian revolution henceforth possesses a program, adopted unanimously in Tripoli, which, if it is applied, will make Algeria into a society belonging to the Algerian masses of peasants and workers, and will make the Algerian State into a workers' State building a socialist society." The content of the "Communiste" preface is summed up thus: "The Political Bureau of the FLN and the General Staff of the ALN...represent, whether one likes it or not, the most revolutionary and also the most important forces, the most solid in their anticolonialist stance." [Note moved from original location—Trans.]
8. *L'Unità*, August 13, 1962.

9. "Comment 2,300 fellahs de Boufarik ont jeté les bases de la réforme agraire," *Alger Républicain*, October 17 and 18, 1962. According to this report, the idea of a management committee for the vacant farms dates from June, that is, from before independence.

10. According to information given, without guarantees, by our correspondent in Algiers.

11. Ben Bella's declaration at Arzew, September 15, 1962.

12. *L'Unità*, August 13, 1962.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Fanon develops this point with a certain intemperance, in *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* (Paris: Maspéro, 1959).

15. P.Bourdieu points out in *The Algerians* (pp. 78–79) that the agricultural workers at times call for the advantages of the *khamezzat*: payment in kind, advances.

16. *The Wretched of the Earth*.

17. And hid us from ourselves.

18. J.-P.Sartre, preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1968), p. 27.

19. *Rapport du groupe d'études des relations financières entre la métropole et l'Algérie* (Maspétial report): Algiers, 1953), pp. 154–56 and 191.

20. "Déclarations de principes relative à la coopération économique et financière," Articles 12 and 13, *journal officiel*, no. 62–63, March 1962.

21. *Ibid.*, Articles 1 and 3.

22. That is, you will not be aided at all, since the compensation for the expropriated lands will exhaust the total amount of aid.

23. The Constantine Plan (October 4, 1958), whose model had been established, essentially, by the minister of Algeria in March 1958, in the report entitled *Perspectives décennales de développement économique de l'Algérie*, Algiers (Ten Year Plan).

24. Contrary to the *Perspectives*, however, the Constantine Plan provided for the distribution of 2,500 hectares of new lands to the "Muslims"—a matter of stabilizing the situation in the countryside by forming a rural petite bourgeoisie. See on this subject A.Gorz, "Gaullisme et néo-gaullisme," *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 179, March 1961.

25. Gendarme, *L'économie de l'Algérie*, pp. 290–310.

26. Gorz, "Gaullisme et néo-gaullisme," p. 1157.

27. Gendarme, *L'économie de l'Algérie*, pp. 305–10.

28. In old francs. The Constantine Plan likewise projected an investment of 2,000 billion for five years.

29. The figures of the Constantine plan are appreciably the same, reduced for a period of five years.

30. However, item two of the preamble to the "Déclarations de principes sur la coopération pour la mise en valeur des richesses du sous-sol du Sahara" substitutes Algeria for France as concessionary. In the same direction, item four of the same declaration limits the rights of the concession holder in relation to the "needs of Algerian domestic consumption and of local refining activities."

31. *Alger Républicain*, October 9, 1962.

32. *Le Monde*, October 27, 1962.

33. For decades, Algeria was France's principal client. In 1962, the Federal Republic of Germany purchased 5,407 million new francs' worth of French goods, Algeria 4,375 million (*La Vie Française*, February 23, 1962).

34. *Le Monde*, October 17 and 18 and November 6, 1962.

35. On November 10, 1962, Ben Bella says to the peasants of the Sétifois: "We want to create a truly popular socialist and democratic society"; he has the Ministry of Agriculture set up state farms in the Kabylie (see *Le Monde*, November 11, 12, and 16). On the 20th, he reassures the bourgeoisie: "There is one sector that is vital for our country: the public sector, but there will

also be a semipublic sector and a private sector. Even in the socialist countries, there exist private sectors that are at times important. There is talk of nationalizations, of draconian measures: there is no question of that. Let the firms that exist resume their activity as quickly as possible" (*Le Monde*, November 21, 1962).

36. This traditional contrast has exceptions and will have them more and more to the degree that the opposition between bureaucratic society of the Russian kind and bourgeois society of the Western kind will become blurred. What determines the capacity of a ruling class to carry out the transformation of an underdeveloped country is in particular its ability to break the commercial monopolies of the international firms and the privileges of the landed aristocracy and the local parasitic bourgeoisies and, consequently, to control the breakdown of foreign aid. The process of bureaucratization that society and the state are undergoing in the West increasingly provides capitalism with the political and economic means to bypass the particular interests of specific groups and to constrain the local bourgeoisie, confronted by the "communist peril," to make a serious effort to transform the country. Under pressure from the United States, Chiang Kai-shek forced the landlords of Formosa to reinvest their profits in the industrial sector; this was also Peron's policy in Argentina. On the other side, to the degree that needs in Russian society develop according to the capitalist model, particularly as a regular increase in the standard of living comes to be required, the ideological link that tied the Soviet Union to the bureaucracies of the underdeveloped countries begins to come undone, and Soviet aid begins to be given in exchange for complete subordination to the policy of peaceful coexistence.

37. See *La Voie Communiste*, October 1962; *Le Monde*, September 23–24 and November 16, 1962. For its part, *Azione Communista* in its edition of October 8, 1962, announces that a group (called Spartacus) of the "new forces who are inspired by the fundamental principles of communism" is at work among the Algerian migrant workers. Spartacus "identifies the FLN, presently in power with Ben Bella, as a military and administrative caste that has taken the place of the old domination to exercise the same functions with the support of the French bourgeoisie." Spartacus's manifesto declares, according to the same source: "Peace in Algeria, far from introducing a revolutionary development of the conflict and permitting a first step toward social revolution, is only a diplomatic and military agreement between the French bourgeoisie, the French colonists, and the bureaucrats of Cairo and Tunis to set a common price for Saharan petroleum and the labor power of the Algerian masses."

38. On the French side, "the balance of arrivals and departures for September leaves an excess of 15,726 and in October 244,355. The average monthly balance had been only +1,963 and +3,564 in 1961." One can savor in passing the humane style of this declaration by the French minister of labor (September 14, 1962).

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